



Collected Poems and Plays

SRI AUROBINDO

Vol. I.

SRI AUROBINDO ASRAM, PONDICHERRY

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

IN these two volumes are collected all the poetical works of Sri Aurobindo that have already been published in book-form or as isolated pieces or serially in periodicals. They are here arranged as far as possible in chronological group-order, for the dates of individual poems are not always ascertainable.

The first group begins with the poems written in Cambridge and London between 1890-1892 which, along with four or five others composed immediately after the return to India in 1893, were published in "Songs to Myrtilla;" among these early poems has been included the "Sonnet to Rajnarayan Bose." The narrative poem "Urvasie" belongs also to these early productions in India. "Love and Death" followed a few years afterwards. The work published in "Ahana and Other Poems" was written partly in this and partly in the following period; they are placed here along with the two dramas in an intermediate position between the first and second groups: "Ahana" the title poem written at Pondicherry and since recast and rewritten is in this collection separated and put at the end of the second group. The dramatic poem "Perseus the Deliverer" was written somewhere between the end of the nineties and the first years of the following decade. The date of composition of the translation of Kalidasa's "Vikramorvasie" is also doubtful, but it was done in Baroda, probably between 1903-1904.

The second group stretches through the period of political activity (from 1902-1910) and concludes with the first five years of retirement in Pondicherry. Most of these writings, "Baji Prabhou," "Vidula" and those published in the "Modern Review," "Karmayogin" and "Standard Bearer," were written in Calcutta and at Deoghar between 1905-1910; but the "Songs of the Sea" were translated from "Sagar-Sangit" at Pondicherry at the request of its author Chittaranjan Das, and the "Century of Life," a translation of Bhartrihari's "Nitisataka," was completed at the same time though most of it was done earlier, a few pieces having even been published in the Baroda College Magazine in the nineties. A number of other poems were written during the stay in Bengal but they were lost in the house-searches, trials, hasty displacements and other vicissitudes of those years of political action, among them two short narra-

tive pieces, a drama "The Viziers of Bassorah," a translation in terza rima of Kalidasa's "Cloud-Messenger," and renderings from the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Vaishnava poets.

The third group comprises work of the later period of retirement in Pondicherry, but we are able only to include twelve recent poems and two short translations. There is a great mass of poems written in the twenties and thirties and after, but never having been published, they fall outside the scope of this collection.

Most of the poems included in former book publications have been reproduced without any change, but minor alterations have been made in the narrative poem "Urvasie," some in the "Perseus" where, also, there are small additions and two long new passages; the end was found to be missing in the serial publication in the weekly "Bande Mataram," and this gap had to be filled. There are retouches in some of the isolated pieces, the "Mother of Dreams," "Kuthumi," etc.

This collected edition is now published to commemorate the 70th birthday of Sri Aurobindo which falls on August 15, 1942. The work here presented is only a small portion of what he has actually written, the bulk of which has not yet seen the light of day. Yet it is hoped that even this fragment will serve to give an idea of the poetic genius that seeks expression in it. Sri Aurobindo once said that he had been first and foremost a poet and a politician, only later he became a Yogi. We can safely amend the statement by saying that even before he became a politician he had been a poet, indeed he was born as a poet and he is a born poet. This aspect of Sri Aurobindo is not, at least has not been, so well known except in a small select circle; we trust that the wider literary public will now have an opportunity to taste of a genuine Pierian spring here disclosed to broad daylight.

COLLECTED POEMS AND PLAYS

1

CONTENTS

I

1890—1902

SONGS TO MYRTILLA

URVASIE

LOVE AND DEATH

1895—1908

POEMS

PERSEUS THE DELIVERER: A DRAMA

Translation

Vikramorvasie (*The Hero and the Nymph*)

II

1902—1915

BAJI PRABHOU

NINE POEMS

Translations

The Century of Life

Hymn to the Mother

Vidula

Songs of the Sea

III

1930—

SIX POEMS

TRANSFORMATION AND OTHER POEMS

Translations

Mother India

Mahalakshmi

APPENDIX I: On Quantitative Metre.

APPENDIX II: Bibliography.

CONTENTS
OF
VOL. I

| | |
|--|------------|
| SONGS TO MYRTILLA | 1 |
| URVASIE | 39 |
| LOVE AND DEATH | 85 |
| POEMS | 121 |
| PERSEUS THE DELIVERER: <i>A Drama</i> | 173 |

SONGS TO MYRTILLA AND OTHER POEMS

*These early poems of
Sri Aurobindo, all except five,
written between his eighteenth
and twentieth years (1890-92),
were printed for private
circulation at Baroda in 1895.*

CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|------|----|
| <i>Songs to Myrtilla</i> | page | 1 |
| <i>O Coïl, Coïl</i> | | 8 |
| <i>Goethe</i> | | 9 |
| <i>The Lost Deliverer</i> | | 10 |
| <i>Charles Stewart Parnell (1891)</i> | | 10 |
| <i>Hic Jacet</i> | | 11 |
| <i>Lines on Ireland (1896)</i> | | 12 |
| <i>On a Satyr and Sleeping Love</i> | | 16 |
| <i>A Rose of Women</i> | | 17 |
| <i>Saraswati with the Lotus</i> | | 17 |
| <i>Night by the Sea</i> | | 18 |
| <i>The Lover's Complaint</i> | | 22 |
| <i>Love in Sorrow</i> | | 24 |
| <i>The Island Grave</i> | | 27 |
| <i>Estelle</i> | | 28 |
| <i>Radha's Complaint in Absence</i> | | 29 |
| <i>Radha's Appeal</i> | | 30 |
| <i>Bankim Chandra Chatterji</i> | | 31 |
| <i>Madhusudan Dutt</i> | | 33 |
| <i>Transiit, Non Periit</i> <i>(Rajnarayan Bose)</i> | | 34 |
| <i>To the Cuckoo</i> | | 35 |
| <i>Envoi</i> | | 36 |

SONGS TO MYRTILLA

GLAUCUS

Sweet is the night, sweet and cool
As to parched lips a running pool;
Sweet when the flowers have fallen asleep
And only moonlit rivulets creep
Like glow-worms in the dim and whispering wood,
To commune with the quiet heart and solitude.
When earth is full of whispers, when
No daily voice is heard of men,
But higher audience brings
The footsteps of invisible things,
When o'er the glimmering tree-tops bowed
The night is leaning on a luminous cloud,
And always a melodious breeze
Sings secret in the weird and charmed trees,
Pleasant 'tis then heart-overawed to lie
Alone with that clear moonlight and that listening sky.

ÆTHON

But day is sweeter; morning bright
Has put the stars out ere the light,
And from their dewy cushions rise
Sweet flowers half-opening their eyes.
O pleasant then to feel as if new-born
The sweet, unripe and virgin air, the air of morn.
And pleasant are her melodies,
Rustle of winds, rustle of trees,

Birds' voices in the eaves,
Birds' voices in the green melodious leaves;
The herdsman's flute among his flocks,
Sweet water hurrying from reluctant rocks,
And all sweet hours and all sweet showers
And all sweet sounds that please the noonday flowers.
Morning has pleasure, noon has golden peace
And afternoon repose and eve the heart's increase.

All things are subject to sweet pleasure,
But three things keep her richest measure.
The breeze that visits heaven
And knows the planets seven,
The green spring with its flowery truth
Creative and the luminous heart of youth.
To all fair flowers and vernal
The wind makes melody diurnal.
On Ocean all night long
He rests, a voice of song.
The blue sea dances like a girl
With sapphire and with pearl
Crowning her locks. Sunshine and dew
Each morn delicious life renew.
The year is but a masque of flowers,
Of light and song and honied showers.
In the soft springtide comes the bird
Of heaven whose speech is one sweet word;
One word of sweet and magic power to bring
Green branches back and ruddy lights of spring.
Summer has pleasant comrades, happy meetings
Of lily and rose and from the trees divinest greetings.

GLAUCUS

For who in April shall remember
The certain end of drear November?

No flowers then live, no flowers
 Make sweet those wretched hours;
 From dead or grieving branches spun
 Unwilling leaves lapse wearily one by one;
 The heart is then in pain
 With the unhappy sound of rain.
 No secret boughs prolong
 A green retreat of song;
 Summer is dead and rich repose
 And springtide and the rose,
 And woods and all sweet things make moan;
 The weeping earth is turned to stone.
 The lovers of her former face,
 Shapes of beauty, melody, grace,
 Where are they? Butterfly and bird
 No more are seen, no songs are heard.
 They see her beauty spent, her splendours done;
 They seek a younger earth, a surer sun.
 When youth has quenched its soft and magic light,
 Delightful things remain but dead is their delight.

ÆTHON

Ah! for a little hour put by
 Dim Hades and his pageantry.
 Forget the future, leave the past,
 The little hour thy life shall last.
 Learn rather from the violet's days
 Soft-blooming in retired ways
 Or dewy bell, the maid undrest
 With creamy childhood in her breast,
 Fierce foxglove and the briony
 And sapphire thyme, the work-room of the bee.
 Behold in emerald fire
 The spotted lizard crawl
 Upon the sun-kissed wall

And coil in tangled brake
The green and sliding snake
Under the red-rose-briar.
Nay, hither see
Lured by thy rose of lips the bee
To woo thy petals open, O sweet,
His flowery murmur here repeat,
Forsaking all the joys of thyme.
Stain not thy perfumed prime
With care for autumn's pale decay,
But live like these thy sunny day.
So when thy tender bloom must fall,
Then shalt thou be as one who tasted all
Life's honey and must now depart
A broken prodigal from pleasure's mart,
A leaf with whom each golden sunbeam sinned,
A dewy leaf and kissed by every wandering wind.

GLAUCUS

How various are thy children, earth!
Behold the rose her lovely birth,
What fires from the bud proceed,
As if the vernal air did bleed.
Breezes and sunbeams, bees and dews
Her lords and lovers she indues,
And these her crimson pleasures prove;
Her life is but a bath of love;
The wide world perfumes when she sighs
And, burning all the winds, of love she dies.
The lily liveth pure,
Yet has she lovers, friends,
And each her bliss intends;
The bees besides her treasure
Besiege of pollened pleasure,
Nor long her gates endure.

The snowdrop cold
 Has vowed the saintly state to hold
 And far from green spring's amorous guilds
 Her snowy hermitage she builds.
 Cowslip attends her vernal duty
 And stops the heart with beauty.
 The crocus asks no vernal thing,
 But all the lovely lights of spring
 Are with rich honeysuckle boon
 And praise her through one summer moon.
 Thus the sweet children of the earth
 Fulfil their natural selves and various birth.
 For one is proud and one sweet months approve
 Diana's saint, but most are bondmaidens of Love.

Love's feet were on the sea
 When he dawned on me.
 His wings were purple-grained and slow;
 His voice was very sweet and very low;
 His rose-lit cheeks, his eyes' pale bloom
 Were sorrow's anteroom;
 His wings did cause melodious moan;
 His mouth was like a rose o'erblown;
 The cypress-garland of renown
 Did make his shadowy crown.
 Fair as the spring he gave
 And sadder than a winter's wave
 And sweet as sunless asphodel,
 My shining lily, Florimel,
 My heart's enhaloed moon,
 My winter's warmth, my summer's shady boon.

ÆTHON

Not from the mighty sea
 Love visited me.

I found as in a jewelled box
Love, rose-red, sleeping with imprisoned locks;
And I have ever known him wild
And merry as a child,
As roses red, as roses sweet,
The west wind in his feet,
Tulip-girdled, kind and bold,
With heartsease in his curls of gold,
Since in the silver mist
Bright Cymothea's lips I kissed,
Whose laughter dances like a gleam
Of sunlight on a hidden stream
That through a wooded way
Runs suddenly into the perfect day.
But what were Cymothea, placed
Where like a silver star Myrtilla blooms?
Such light as cressets cast
In long and sun-lit rooms.
Thy presence is to her
As oak to juniper,
Thy beauty as the gorgeous rose
To privet by the lane that blows,
Gold-crownèd blooms to mere fresh grass,
Eternal ivy to brief blooms that pass.

GLAUCUS

But Florimel beside thee, sweet,
Pales like a candle in the brilliant noon.
Snowdrops are thy feet,
Thy waist a crescent moon,
And like a silver wand
Thy body slight doth stand
Or like a silver beech aspire.
Thine arms are walls for white caresses,
Thy mouth a tale of crimson kisses,

Thine eyes two amorous treasures of fire.
To what shall poet liken thee?
Art thou a goddess of the sea
Purple-tressed and laughter-lipped
From thy choric sisters slipped
To wander on the flowery land?
Or art thou siren on the treacherous sand
Summer-voiced to charm the ear
Of the wind-vested mariner?
Ah! but what are these to thee,
Brighter gem than knows the sea,
Lovelier girl than sees the stream
Naked, Naiad of a dream,
Whiter Dryad than men see
Dancing round the lone oak-tree,
Flower and most enchanting birth
Of ten ages of the earth!
The Graces in thy body move
And in thy lips the ruby hue of Love.

O Coïl, Coïl

O coïl, honied envoy of the spring,
Cease thy too happy voice, grief's record, cease:
For I recall that day of vernal trees,
The soft asoca's bloom, the laden winds
And green felicity of leaves, the hush,
The sense of Nature living in the woods.
Only the river rippled, only hummed
The languid murmuring bee, far-borne and slow,
Emparadised in odours, only used
The ringdove his divine heart-moving speech;
But sweetest to my pleased and singing heart
Thy voice, O coïl, in the peepel tree.

O me! for pleasure turned to bitterest tears!
O me! for the swift joy, too great to live,
That only bloomed one hour! O wondrous day,
That crowned the bliss of those delicious years.
The vernal radiance of my lover's lips
Was shut like a red rose upon my mouth,
His voice was richer than the murmuring leaves,
His love around me than the summer air.
Five hours entangled in the coïl's cry
Lay my beloved twixt my happy breasts.
O voice of tears! O sweetness uttering death!
O lost ere yet that happy cry was still!

O tireless voice of spring! Again I lie
In odorous gloom of trees; unseen and near
The windlark gurgles in the golden leaves,
The woodworm spins in shrillness on the bough:

Thou by the waters wailing to thy love,
O chocrobacque! have comfort, since to thee
The dawn brings sweetest recompense of tears
And she thou lovest hears thy pain. But I
Am desolate in the heart of fruitful months,
Am widowed in the sight of happy things,
Uttering my moan to the unhousèd winds,
O coil, coil, to the winds and thee.

Goethe

A perfect face amid barbarian faces,
A perfect voice of sweet and serious rhyme,
Traveller with calm, inimitable paces,
Critic with judgment absolute to all time,
A complete strength when men were maimed and weak,
German obscured the spirit of a Greek.

The Lost Deliverer

Pythian he came; repressed beneath his heel
The hydra of the world with bruised head.
Vainly, since Fate's immeasurable wheel
Could parley with a straw. A weakling sped
The bullet when to custom's usual night
We fell because a woman's faith was light.

Charles Stewart Parnell
1891

O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,
Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,
Who smot'st them with an edge surpassing swords!
Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,
Since vainly filled thy luminous doom of birth.

Hic Jacet

Glasnevin Cemetery

Patriots, behold your guerdon. This man found
 Erin, his mother, bleeding, chastised, bound,
 Naked to imputation, poor, denied,
 While alien masters held her house of pride.
 And now behold her! Terrible and fair
 With the eternal ivy in her hair,
 Armed with the clamorous thunder, how she stands
 Like Pallas' self the Gorgon in her hands.
 True that her puissance will be easily past,
 The vision ended; she herself has cast
 Her fate behind her: yet the work not vain
 Since that which once has been may be again,
 And she this image yet recover, fired
 With godlike workings, brain and hands inspired,
 So stand, the blush of battle on her cheek,
 Voice made armipotent, deeds that loudly speak,
 Like some dread Sphinx, half patent to the eye,
 Half veiled in formidable secrecy.
 And he who raised her from her forlorn life
 Loosening the fountains of that mighty strife,
 Where sits he? On what high foreshadowing throne
 Guarded by grateful hearts? Beneath this stone
 He lies: this guerdon only Ireland gave,
 A broken heart and an unhonoured grave.

Lines on Ireland 1896

After six hundred years did Fate intend
Her perfect perseverance thus should end?
So many years she strove, so many years,
Enduring toil, enduring bitter tears,
She waged religious war, with sword and song
Insurgent against Fate and numbers, strong
To inflict as to sustain; her weak estate
Could not conceal the goddess in her gait;
Goddess her mood. Therefore that light was she
In whom races of weaker destiny
Their beauteous image of rebellion saw;
Treason could not unnerve, violence o'erawe—
A mirror to enslaved nations, never
O'ercome, though in the field defeated ever.
O mutability of human merit!
How changed, how fallen from her ancient spirit!
She that was Ireland, Ireland now no more,
In beggar's weeds behold at England's door
Neglected sues or at the best returned
With hollow promise, happy if not spurned
Perforce, she that had yesterday disdained
Less than her mighty purpose to have gained.
Had few short change of seasons puissance then,
O nurse and mother of heroic men,
Thy genius to outwear, thy strength well-placed
And old traditionary courage, waste
Thy vehement nature? Nay, not time, but thou
These ancient praises stov'st to disavow.

For 'tis not foreign force, nor weight of wars,
 Nor treason, nor surprise, nor opposite stars,
 Not all these have enslaved nor can, whate'er
 Vulgar opinion bruit, nor years impair,
 Ruin discourage, nor disease abate
 A nation. Men are fathers of their fate;
 They dig the prison, they the crown command.
 Yet thine own self a little understand,
 Unhappy country, and be wise at length.
 An outward weakness doing deeds of strength
 Amazed the nations, but a power within
 Directed, like effective spirit unseen
 Behind the mask of trivial forms, a source
 And fund of tranquil and collected force.
 This was the sense that made thee royal, blessed
 With sanction from on high and that impressed
 Which could thyself transfigure and infuse
 Thine action with such pride as kings do use.
 But thou to thine own self disloyal, hast
 Renounced the help divine turning thy past
 To idle legends and fierce tales of blood,
 Mere violent wrath with no proposed good.
 Therefore effective wisdom, skill to bend
 All human things to one predestined end
 Renounce thee. Honest purpose, labour true,
 These dwell not with the self-appointed crew
 Who, having conquered by death's aid, abuse
 The public ear,—for seldom men refuse
 Credence, when mediocrity multiplied
 Equals itself with genius—fools! whose pride
 Absurd the gods permit a little space
 To please their souls with laughter, then replace
 In the loud limbo of futilities.
 How fallen art thou being ruled by these!

Ignoble hearts, courageous to effect
Their country's ruin; such the heavens reject
For their high agencies and leave exempt
Of force, mere mouths and vessels of contempt.
They of thy famous past and nature real
Uncareful, have denied thy rich ideal
For private gains, the burden would not brook
Of that sustaining genius, when it took
A form of visible power, since it demanded
All meaner passions for its sake disbanded.
As once against the loud Euphratic host
The lax Ionians of the Asian coast
Drew out their numbers, but not long enduring
Rigorous hard-hearted toil to the alluring
Cool shadow of the olives green withdrew;
Freedom's preparators though well they knew
Labour exact, discipline, pains well nerved
In the severe unpitying sun, yet swerved
From their ordeal; Ireland so deceiving
The world's great hope, her temples large relieving
Of the too heavy laurel, rather chose
Misery, civil battle, triumphant foes
Than rational order and divine control.
Therefore her brighter fate and nobler soul
Glasnevin with that hardly-honoured bier
Received. But the immortal mind austere,
By man rejected, of eternal praise
Has won its meed and sits with heavenly bays,
Not variable breath of favour, crowned
On high. And grieves it not, spirit renowned,
Mortal ingratitude though now forgiven,
Grieves it not, even on the hills of heaven,
After so many mighty toils, defeats
So many, cold repulse and vernal heats

Of hope, iron endurance throned apart
In lonely strength within thy godlike heart,
Obloquy faced, health lost, the goal nigh won,
To see at last thy strenuous work undone?
So falls it ever when a race condemned
To strict and lasting bondage, have contemned
Their great deliverer, self and ease preferring
To labour's crown, by their own vileness erring.
Thus the uncounselled Isrælites of old,
Binding their mightiest, for their own ease sold,
Who else had won them glorious liberty
To his Philistian foes, as thine did thee.
Thou likewise, had thy puissant soul endured
Within its ruined house to stay immured,
With parallel disaster and o'erthrow
Hadst daunted and their conjured strength laid low.
But time was adverse. Thus too Heracles
In exile closed by the Olynthian seas,
Not seeing Thebes nor Dirce any more,
His friendless eyelids on an alien shore.
Yet not unbidden of heaven the men renowned
Have laboured, though no fruit apparent crowned
Nor praise contemporary touched with leaf
Of civic favour, who for joy or grief
To throned injustice never bowed the head.
They triumph from the houses of the dead.
Thou too, high spirit, mighty genius, glass
Of patriots, into others' deeds shalt pass
With force and tranquil fortitude thy dower,
An inspiration and a fount of power.
Nor to thy country only nor thy day
Art thou a name and a possession, stay
Of loftiest natures, but where'er and when
In time's full ripeness and the date of men

Alien oppression maddened has the wise,—
For ever thus preparing Nemesis
In ruling nations unjust power has borne
Insolence, injustice, madness, outrage, scorn,
Its natural children, then, by high disdain
And brave example pushed to meet their pain,
The pupils of thy greatness shall appear,
Souls regal to the mould divine most near,
And reign, or rise on throne-intending wings,
Making thee father to a line of kings.

On a Satyr and Sleeping Love

Me whom the purple mead that Bromius owns
And girdles rent of amorous girls did please,
Now the inspired and curious hand decrees
That waked quick life in these quiescent stones,
To yield thee water pure. Thou lest the sleep
Yon perilous boy unchain, more softly creep.

PLATO.

A Rose of Women

Now lilies blow upon the windy height,
Now flowers the pansy kissed by tender rain,
Narcissus builds his house of self-delight
And Love's own fairest flower blooms again;
Vainly your gems, O meadows, you recall;
One simple girl breathes sweeter than you all.

MELEAGER.

Saraswati with the Lotus

(*Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Obiit 1894*)

Thy tears fall fast, O mother, on its bloom,
O white-armed mother, like honey fall thy tears;
Yet even their sweetness can no more relume
The golden light, the fragrance heaven rears,
The fragrance and the light for ever shed
Upon his lips immortal who is dead.

Night by the Sea

Love, a moment drop thy hands;
Night within my soul expands.
Veil thy beauties milk-rose-fair
In that dark and showering hair.
Coral kisses ravish not
When the soul is tinged with thought;
Burning looks are then forbid.
Let each shyly-parted lid
Hover like a settling dove
O'er those deep-blue wells of Love.
Darkness brightens; silvering flee
Pomps of foam the driven sea.

In this garden's dim repose
Lighted with the burning rose,
Soft narcissi's golden camp
Glimmering or with rosier lamp
Censured honeysuckle guessed
By the fragrance of her breast,—
Here where summer's hands have crowned
Silence in the fields of sound,
Here felicity should be.
Hearken, Edith, to the sea.

What a voice of grief intrudes
On these happy solitudes!
To the wind that with him dwells
Ocean, old historian, tells
All the dreadful heart of tears
Hidden in the pleasant years.

Summer's children, what do ye
By the stern and cheerless sea?

Not we first nor we alone
Heard the mighty Ocean moan
By this treasure-house of flowers
In the sweet ambiguous hours.
Many a girl's lips ruby-red
With their vernal honey fed
Happy mouths, and soft cheeks flushed
With Love's rosy sunlight blushed.
Ruddy lips of many a boy
Blithe discovered hills of joy
Ruby-guided through a kiss
To the sweet highways of bliss.
Here they saw the evening still
Coming slowly from the hill
And the patient stars arise
To their outposts in the skies;
Heard the ocean shoreward urge
The speed and thunder of his surge,
Singing heard as though a bee
Noontide waters on the sea.
These no longer. For our rose
In her place they wreathed once, blows,
And thy glorious garland, sweet,
Kissed not once those wandering feet.
All the lights of spring are ended,
To the wintry haven wended.
Beauty's boons and nectarous leisure,
Lips, the honeycombs of pleasure,
Cheeks enrosed, Love's natal soil,
Breasts, the ardent conqueror's spoil,
Spring rejects; a lovelier child
His brittle fancies has beguiled.

O her name that to repeat
Than the Dorian muse more sweet
Could the white hand more relume
Writing and refresh the bloom
Of lips that used such syllables then,
Dies unloved by later men.
Are we more than summer flowers?
Shall a longer date be ours,
Rose and springtime, youth and we
By the everlasting sea?

Are they blown as legends tell
In the smoke and gurge of hell?
Writhe they in relucant gyres
O'er a circle sad of fires?
In what lightless groves must they
Or un murmuring alleys stray?
Fields no sunlight visits, streams
Where no happy lotus gleams?
Yet, where'er their steps below,
Memories sweet for comrades go.
Lethe's waters had their will,
But the soul remembers still.
Beauty pays her boon of breath
To thy narrow credit, Death,
Leaving a brief perfume; we
Perish also by the sea.

We shall lose, ah me! too soon
Lose the clear and silent moon,
The serenities of night
And the deeper evening light.
We shall know not when the morn
In the widening East is born,

Never feel the west-wind stir,
 Spring's delightful messenger,
 Never under branches lain
 Dally with the sweet-lipped rain,
 Watch the moments of the tree,
 Nor know the sounds that tread the sea.

With thy kisses chase this gloom:—
 Thoughts, the children of the tomb.
 Kiss me, Edith. Soon the night
 Comes and hides the happy light.
 Nature's vernal darlings dead
 From new founts of life are fed.
 Dawn relumes the immortal skies.
 Ah! what boon for earth-closed eyes?
 Love's sweet debts are standing, sweet;
 Honied payment to complete
 Haste—a million is to pay—
 Lest too soon the allotted day
 End and we oblivious keep
 Darkness and eternal sleep.
 See! the moon from heaven falls.
 In thy bosom's snow-white walls
 Softly and supremely housed
 Shut my heart up; keep it closed
 Like a rose of Indian grain,
 Like that rose against the rain,
 Closed to all that life applauds,
 Nature's perishable gauds,
 And the airs that burdened be
 With such thoughts as shake the sea.

The Lover's Complaint

O plaintive, murmuring reed, begin thy strain;
 Unloose that heavenly tongue,
 Interpreter divine of pain;
Utter thy voice, the sister of my song.
Thee in the silver waters growing,
Arcadian Pan, strange whispers blowing
Into thy delicate stops, did teach
A language lovelier than speech.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, begin thy strain;
 O plaintive, murmuring reed.
 Nisa to Mopsus is decreed,
The moonwhite Nisa to a swarthy swain.
What love-gift now shall Hope not bring?
Election dwells no more with beauty's king.
The wild weed now has wed the rose,
Now ivy on the bramble grows;
Too happy lover, fill the lamp of bliss!
Too happy lover, drunk with Nisa's kiss!
For thee pale Cynthia leaves her golden car,
For thee from Tempe stoops the white and evening star.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain;
 O solace anguish yet again.
 I thought Love soft as velvet sleep,
Sweeter than dew's nocturnal breezes weep,
Cool as water in a murmuring pass
And shy as violets in the vernal grass,
But hard as Nisa's heart is he
And salt as the unharvestable sea.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain.

One morn she came; her mouth
Breathing the odours of the south,
With happy eyes and heaving bosom fain.
She asked for fruit long-stored in autumn's hold.
These gave I; from the branch dislodged I threw
Sweet-hearted apples in their age of gold
And pears divine for taste and hue.
And one I saw, should all the rest excel;
But error led my plucking hand astray
And with a sudden sweet dismay
My heart into her apron fell.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain.

My bleeding heart awhile
She kept and bloomed upon its pain,
Then slighted as a broken thing and vile.
Now Mopsus in his unblest arms,
Mopsus enfolds her heavenlier charms,
Mopsus to whom the Muse averse
Refused her gracious secrets to rehearse.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, breathe yet thy strain.

Ye glades, your bliss I grudge you not,
Nor would I that my grief profane
Your sacred summer with intruding thought.
Yet since I will no more behold
Your glorious beauty stained with gold
From shadows of her hair, nor by some well
Made naked of their sylvan dress
The breasts, the limbs I never shall possess,
Therefore, O mother Arethuse, farewell.

For me no place abides
By the green verge of thy belovèd tides.
To Lethe let my footsteps go
And wailing waters in the realms below,
Where happier song is none than moaning pain
Nor any lovelier Syrinx than the weed.
Child of the lisping waters, hush thy strain,
O murmuring, plaintive reed.

Love in Sorrow

Do you remember, Love, that sunset pale
When from near meadows sad with mist the breeze
Sighed like a feverous soul and with soft wail
The ghostly river sobbed among the trees?
I think that Nature heard our misery
Weep to itself and wept for sympathy.

For we were strangers then; we knew not Fate
In ambush by the solitary stream
Nor did our sorrows hope to find a mate,
Much less of love or friendship dared we dream.
Rather we thought that loneliness and we
Were wed in marble perpetuity.

For there was none who loved me, no, not one.
Alas, what was there that a man should love?
For I was misery's last and frailest son
And even my mother bade me homeless rove.

And I had wronged my youth and nobler powers
By weak attempts, small failures, wasted hours.

Therefore I laid my cheek on the chill grass
And murmured, "I am overborne with grief
And joy to richer natures hopes to pass.

Oh me! my life is like an aspen leaf
That shakes but will not fall. My thoughts are blind
And life so bitter that death seems almost kind.

"How am I weary of the days' increase,
Of the moon's brightness and the splendid stars,
The sun that dies not. I would be at peace,
Nor blind my soul with images, nor force
My lips to mirth whose later taste is death,
Nor with vain utterance load my weary breath."

Thus murmured I aloud nor deemed I spoke
To human ears, but you were hidden, sweet,
Behind the willows when my plaining broke
Upon your lonely muse. Ah kindly feet
That brushed the grass in tender haste to bind
Another's wounds, you were less wise than kind.

You said, "My brother, lift your forlorn eyes;
I am your sister more than you unblest."
I looked upon your face, the book of sighs
And index to incurable unrest.
I rose and kissed you, sweet. Your lips were warm
And drew my heart out like a witch's charm.

We parted where the sacred spires arose
In silent power above the silent street.
I saw you mid the rose-trees, O white rose,
Linger a moment, then the dusk defeat

My eyes, and, listening, heard your footsteps fade
On the sad leaves of the autumnal glade.

And were you happy, sweet? In me I know—
For either in my blood the autumn sang
His own pale requiem or that new sweet glow
Failed in the light of bitter knowledge—rang
A voice that said, “Behold the loves too pure
To live, the joy that never shall endure.”

This too I know, nor is my hope so bright
But that it sees its autumn cold and sere
Attending with a pale and solemn light
Beyond the gardens of the vernal year.
Yet will I not my weary heart constrain
But take you, sweet, and sweet surcease from pain.

The Island Grave

Ocean is there and evening; the slow moan
Of the blue waves that like a shaken robe
Two heard together once, one hears alone.

Now gliding white and hushed towards our globe
Keen January with cold eyes and clear
And snowdrops pendent in each frosty lobe

Ushers the firstborn of the radiant year.
Haply his feet that grind the breaking mould,
May brush the dead grass on thy secret bier,

Haply his joyless fingers wan and cold
Caress the ruined masses of thy hair,
Pale child of winter, dead ere youth was old.

Art thou so desolate in that bitter air
That even his breath feels warm upon thy face?
Ah till the daffodil is born, forbear,

And I will meet thee in that lonely place.
Then the grey dawn shall end my hateful days
And death admit me to the silent ways.

Estelle

Why do thy lucid eyes survey,
Estelle, their sisters in the milky way?
The blue heavens cannot see
Thy beauty nor the planets praise.
Blindly they walk their old accustomed ways.
Turn hither for felicity.
My body's earth thy vernal power declares,
My spirit is a heaven of thousand stars,
And all these lights are thine and open doors on thee.

Radha's Complaint in Absence

[Imitated from the Bengali of Chundīdas]

O heart, my heart, a heavy pain is thine!
What land is that where none doth know
Love's cruel name nor any word of sin?
My heart, there let us go.

Friend of my soul, who then has called love sweet?
Laughing I called from heavenly spheres
The sweet love close; he came with flying feet
And turned my life to tears.

What highborn girl, exiling virgin pride,
Has wooed love to her with a laugh?
His fires shall burn her as in harvest-tide
The mowers burn the chaff.

O heart, my heart, merry thy sweet youth ran
In fields where no love was; thy breath
Is anguish, since his cruel reign began.
What other cure but death?

Radha's Appeal

[Imitated from the Bengali of Chandidas]

O love, what more shall I, shall Radha speak,
Since mortal words are weak?

In life, in death,
In being and in breath
No other lord but thee can Radha seek.

About thy feet the mighty net is wound
Wherein my soul they bound;
Myself resigned
To servitude my mind;
My heart than thine no sweeter slavery found.

I, Radha, thought; through the three worlds my gaze
I sent in wild amaze;

I was alone.
None called me "Radha!", none;
I saw no hand to clasp, no friendly face.

I sought my father's house; my father's sight
Was empty of delight;
No tender friend
Her loving voice would lend;
My cry came back unanswered from the night.

Therefore to this sweet sanctuary I brought
My chilled and shuddering thought.
Ah, suffer, sweet,
To thy most faultless feet
That I should cling unchid; ah, spurn me not!

Spurn me not, dear, from thy beloved breast,
A woman weak, unblest.
Thus let me cling,
Thus, thus about my king
And thus remain caressing and caressed.

I, Radha, thought; without my life's sweet lord,
—Strike now thy mightiest chord—
I had no power
To live one simple hour;
His absence slew my soul as with a sword.

If one brief moment steal thee from mine eyes,
My heart within me dies.
As girls who keep
The treasures of the deep,
I string thee round my neck and on my bosom prize.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji

How hast thou lost, O month of honey and flowers,
The voice that was thy soul! Creative showers,
The cuckoo's daylong cry and moan of bees,
Zephyrs and streams and softly-blossoming trees
And murmuring laughter and heart-easing tears
And tender thoughts and great and the compeers
Of lily and jasmine and melodious birds,
All these thy children into lovely words
He changed at will and made soul-moving books
From hearts of men and women's honied looks.

O master of delicious words! the bloom
Of chompuk and the breath of king-perfume
Have made each musical sentence with the noise
Of women's ornaments and sweet household joys
And laughter tender as the voice of leaves
Playing with vernal winds. The eye receives
That reads these lines an image of delight,
A world with shapes of spring and summer, noon and night;
All nature in a page, no pleasing show
But men more real than the friends we know.
O plains, O hills, O rivers of sweet Bengal,
O land of love and flowers, the spring-bird's call
And southern wind are sweet among your trees:
Your poet's words are sweeter far than these.
Your heart was this man's heart. Subtly he knew
The beauty and divinity in you.
His nature kingly was and as a god
In large serenity and light he trod
His daily way, yet beauty, like soft flowers
Wreathing a hero's sword, ruled all his hours.
Thus moving in these iron times and drear,
Barren of bliss and robbed of golden cheer,
He sowed the desert with ruddy-hearted rose,
The sweetest voice that ever spoke in prose.

Madhusudan Dutt

Poet, who first with skill inspired did teach
 Greatness to our divine Bengali speech,—
 Divine, but rather with delightful moan
 Spring's golden mother makes when twin-alone
 She lies with golden Love and heaven's birds
 Call hymeneal with enchanting words
 Over their passionate faces, rather these
 Than with the calm and grandiose melodies
 (Such calm as consciousness of godhead owns)
 The high gods speak upon their ivory thrones
 Sitting in council high,—till taught by thee
 Fragrance and noise of the world-shaking sea.
 Thus do they praise thee who amazed espy
 Thy winged epic and hear the arrows cry
 And journeyings of alarmed gods; and due
 The praise, since with great verse and numbers new
 Thou mad'st her godlike who was only fair.
 And yet my heart more perfectly ensnare
 Thy soft impassioned flutes and more thy Muse
 To wander in the honied months doth choose
 Than courts of kings, with Sita in the grove
 Of happy blossoms, (O musical voice of love
 Murmuring sweet words with sweeter sobs between!)
 With Shoorpa in the Vindhyan forests green
 Laying her wonderful heart upon the sod
 Made holy by the well-loved feet that trod
 Its vocal shades; and more unearthly bright
 Thy jewelled songs made of relucant light

Wherein the birds of spring and summer and all flowers
And murmuring waters flow, her widowed hours
Making melodious who divinely loved.
No human hands such notes ambrosial moved;
These accents are not of the imperfect earth;
Rather the god was voiceful in their birth,
The god himself of the enchanting flute,
The god himself took up thy pen and wrote.

Transiit, Non Periiit

[My grandfather, Rajnarayan Bose, died September 1899]

Not in annihilation lost, nor given
To darkness art thou fled from us and light,
O strong and sentient spirit; no mere heaven
Of ancient joys, no silence eremite
Received thee; but the omnipresent Thought
Of which thou wast a part and earthly hour,
Took back its gift. Into that splendour caught
Thou hast not lost thy special brightness. Power
Remains with thee and the old genial force
Unseen for blinding light, not darkly lurks:
As when a sacred river in its course
Dives into ocean, there its strength abides
Not less because with vastness wed and works
Unnoticed in the grandeur of the tides.

To the Cuckoo

Sounds of the wakening world, the year's increase,
Passage of wind and all his dewy powers
With breath and laughter of new-bathed flowers
And that deep light of heaven above the trees
Awake mid leaves that muse in golden peace
Sweet noise of birds, but most in heavenly showers
The cuckoo's voice pervades the lucid hours,
Is priest and summoner of these melodies.
The spent and weary streams refresh their youth
At that creative rain and barren groves
Regain their face of flowers; in thee the ruth
Of Nature wakening her dead children moves.
But chiefly to renew thou hast the art
Fresh childhood in the obscured human heart.

Envoi

*Ite hinc, Camenae, vos quoque ite jam, sane
Dulces Camenae, nam fatebimur verum
Dulces fuistis, et tamen meas chartas
Revisitote sed pudenter et raro.*

Pale poems, weak and few, who vainly use
Your wings towards the unattainable spheres,
Offspring of the divine Hellenic Muse,
Poor maimèd children born of six disastrous years!

Not as your mother's is your wounded grace,
Since not to me with equal love returned
The hope which drew me to that serene face
Wherein no unrepouseful light of effort burned.

Depart and live for seasons many or few
If live you may, but stay not here to pain
My heart with hopeless passion and renew
Visions of beauty that my lips shall ne'er attain.

For in Sicilian olive-groves no more
Or seldom must my footprints now be seen,
Nor tread Athenian lanes, nor yet explore
Parnassus or thy voiceful shores, O Hippocrene.

Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati
Has called to regions of eternal snow
And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,
Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow.

URVASIE



Urvasie

CANTO I

Pururavus from Titan conflict ceased
Turned worldwards, through illimitable space
Had travelled like a star 'twixt earth and heaven
Slowly and brightly. Late our mortal air
He breathed; for downward now the hooves divine
Trampling out fire with sound before them went,
And the great earth rushed up towards him, green.
With the first line of dawn he touched the peaks,
Nor paused upon those savage heights, but reached
Inferior summits subject to the rain,
And rested. Looking northwards thence he saw
The giant snows upclimbing to the sky,
And felt the mighty silence. In his ear
The noise of a retreating battle was,
Wide crash of wheels and hard impetuous blare
Of trumpets and the sullen march of hosts.
Therefore with joy he drank into his soul
The virgin silence inaccessible
Of mountains and divined his mother's breasts.
But as he listened to the hush, a thought
Came to him from the spring and he turned round
And gazed into the quiet maiden East,
Watching that birth of day, as if a line
Of some great poem out of dimness grew,
Slowly unfolding into perfect speech.
The grey lucidity and pearliness
Bloomed more and more, and over earth chaste again
The freshness of the primal dawn returned,

Life coming with a virginal sharp strength,
 Renewed as from the streams of Paradise.
 Nearer it drew now to him and he saw
 Out of the widening glory move a face
 Of dawn, a body fresh from mystery,
 Enveloped with a prophecy of light
 More rich than perfect splendours. It was she,
 The golden virgin, Usha, mother of life,
 Yet virgin. In a silence sweet she came,
 Unveiled, soft-smiling, like a bride, rose-cheeked,
 Her bosom full of flowers, the morning wind
 Stirring her hair and all about her gold.
 Nor sole she came. Behind her faces laughed
 Delicious, girls of heaven whose beauties ease
 The labour of the battle-weary Gods;
 They in the golden dawn of things sprang gold,
 From youth of the immortal Ocean born,
 They youthful and immortal, and the waves
 Were in their feet and in their voices fresh
 As foam, and Ocean in their souls was love.
 Laughing they ran among the clouds, their hair
 And raiment all a tempest in the breeze.
 The sky grew glorious with them and their feet
 A restless loveliness and glad eyes full
 Of morning and divine faces bent back
 For the imperious kisses of the wind.
 So danced they numberless as dew-drops gleam,
 Ménaca, Misracayshie, Mullica,
 Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie,
 Lolita, Lavonya and Tilôttama,—
 Many delightful names; among them she.
 And seeing her Pururavus the king
 Shuddered as of felicity afraid,
 And all the wide heart of Pururavus
 Moved like the sea—when with a coming wind

Great Ocean lifts in far expectancy
 Waiting to feel the shock, so was he moved
 By expectation of her face. For this
 Was secret in its own divinity
 Like a high sun of splendour, or half seen
 All troubled with her hair. Yet Paradise
 Breathed from her limbs and tresses wonderful,
 With odours and with dreams. Then for a space
 Voiceless the great king stood and, troubled, watched
 That lovely advent, laughter and delight
 Gaining upon the world. At last he sighed
 And the vague passion broke from him in speech
 Heard by the solitude. "O thou strong god,
 Who art thou graspest me with hands of fire,
 Making my soul all colour? Surely I thought
 The hills would move and the eternal stars
 Deviate from their rounds immutable,
 Never Pururavus; yet lo! I fall.
 My soul whirls alien and I hear amazed
 The galloping of uncontrollable steeds.
 Men said of me: 'The King Pururavus
 Grows more than man; he lifts to azure heaven
 In vast equality his spirit sublime,'
 Why sink I now towards attractive earth?
 And thou, who art thou, mystery! golden wonder!
 Moving enchantress! Wast thou not a part
 Of soft auspicious evenings I have loved?
 Have I not seen thy beauty on the clouds?
 In moonlight and in starlight and in fire?
 Some flower whose brightness was a trouble? a face
 Whose memory like a picture lived with me?
 A thought I had, but lost? O was thy voice
 A vernal repetition in some grove,
 Telling of lilies clustered o'er with bees
 And quiet waters open to the moon?

Surely in some past life I loved thy name,
 And syllable by syllable now strive
 Its sweetness to recall. It seems the grace
 Of visible things, of hushed and lonely snows
 And burning great inexorable noons,
 And towns and valleys and the mountain winds.
 All beauty of earthliness is in thee, all
 Luxurious experience of the soul.
 O comest thou because I left thy charm
 Aiming at purity, Oh comest thou,
 Goddess, to avenge thyself with beauty? Come!
 Unveil thyself from light! limit thyself,
 O infinite grace, that I may find, may clasp.
 For surely in my heart I know thou bearest
 A name that naturally weds with mine,
 And I perceive our union magically
 Inevitable as a perfect verse
 Of Veda. Set thy feet upon my heart,
 O Goddess! woman, to my bosom move!
 I am Pururavus, O Urvasie."
 As when a man to the grey face of dawn
 Awaking from an unremembered dream,
 Repines at life awhile and buffets back
 The wave of old familiar thoughts, and hating
 His usual happiness and usual cares
 Strives to recall a dream's felicity;—
 Long strives in vain and rolls his painful thought
 Through many alien ways, when sudden comes
 A flash, another, and the vision burns
 Like lightning in the brain, so leaped that name
 Into the musing of the troubled king.
 Joyous he cried aloud and lashed his steeds:
 They, rearing, leaped from Himalaya high
 And trampled with their hooves the southern wind.
 But now a cry broke from the lovely crowd

Of fear and tremulous astonishment;
And they huddled together like doves dismayed
Who see the inevitable talons near
And rush of cruel wings. 'Twas not from him,
For him they saw not yet, but from the north
A fear was on them, and Pururavus
Heard a low roar as of a distant cloud.
He turned half-wrathful. In the far north-west
Heaven stood thick, concentrated in gloom,
Darkness in darkness hidden; for the cloud
Rose firmament on sullen firmament,
As if all brightness to entomb. Across
Great thundrous whispers rolled, and lightning quivered
From edge to edge, a savage pallor. Down
The south wind dropped appalled. Then for a while
Stood pregnant with the thunderbolt and wearing
Rain like a colour, the monumental cloud
Sublime and voiceless. Long the heart was stilled
And the ear waited listening. Suddenly
From motionless battalions as outride
A speed disperse of horsemen, from that mass
Of livid menace went a frail light cloud
Rushing through heaven, and behind it streamed
The downpour all in wet and greenish lines.
Swift rushed the splendid anarchy admired,
And reached, and broke, and with a roar of rain
And tumult on the wings of wind and clasp
Of the o'erwhelmed horizons and with bursts
Of thunder breaking all the body with sound
And lightning 'twixt the eyes intolerable,
Like heaven's vast eagle all that blackness swept
Down over the inferior snowless heights
And swallowed up the dawn. Pururavus,
Lost in the streaming tumult, stood amazed:
But as he watched, he was aware of locks

Flying and a wild face and terrible
And fierce familiar eyes. Again he looked
And knew him in a hundred battles crossed,
The giant Cayshie. It seemed but yesterday
That over the waves of fight their angry eyes
Had met. He in the dim disguise of rain,
All swift with storm, came passionate and huge,
Filling the regions with himself. Immense
He stooped upon the brides of heaven. They
Like flowers in a gust scattered and blown
Fled every way; but he upon that beauty
Magical sprang and seized and lifted up,
As the storm lifts a lily, and arrow-like
Up towards the snow-bound heights in rising cloud
Rushed with the goddess to the trembling East.
But with more formidable speed and fast
Storming through heaven King Pururavus
Hurled after him. The giant turned and knew
The sound of those victorious wheels and light
In a man's face more dangerous to evil
Than all the shining Gods. He stood, he raised
One dreadful arm that stretched across the heavens,
And shook his baffling lance on high. But vast,
But magnified by speed came threatening on
With echoing hooves and battle in its wheels
The chariot of the King Pururavus
Bearing a formidable charioteer,
Pururavus. The fiend paused, he rolled his eyes
Full of defiance, passion and despair
Upon the swooning goddess in his arms
And that avenger. Violence and fear
Poised him a moment on a wave of fate
This way to death cadent, that way to shame.
Then groaning in his great tumultuous breast
He dropped upon the snow heaven's ravished flower

And fled, a blackness in the East. New sky
Replenished from the sullen cloud dawned out;
The great pure azure rose in sunlight wide.
Nor King Pururavus pursued but checked
His rushing chariot on the quiet snow
And sprang towards her and knelt down and trembled.
Perfect she lay amid her tresses wide,
Like a mishandled lily luminous,
As she had fallen. From the lucid robe
One shoulder gleamed and golden breast left bare,
Divinely lifting, one gold arm was flung.
A warm rich splendour exquisitely outlined
Against the dazzling whiteness, and her face
Was as a fallen moon among the snows.
And King Pururavus, beholding, glowed
Through all his limbs and maddened with a love
He feared and cherished. Overawed and hushed,
Hardly even breathing, long he knelt, a greatness
Made stone with sudden dread and passion. Love
With fiery attempt plucked him all down to her,
But fear forbade his lips the perfect curls.
At length he raised her still unkissed and laid
In his bright chariot, next himself ascended
And resting on one arm with fearful joy
Her drooping head, with the other ruled the car;—
With one arm ruled, but his eyes were for her
Studying her fallen lids and to heart-beats
Guessing the sweetness of the soul concealed.
And soon she moved. Those wonderful wide orbs
Dawned into his, quietly, as if in muse.
A lovely slow surprise crept into them
Afterwards; last, something far lovelier,
Which was herself, and was delight, and love.
As when a child falls asleep unawares
At a closed window on a stormy day,

Looking into the weary rain, and long
 Sleeps, and wakes quietly into a life
 Of ancient moonlight, first the thoughtfulness
 Of that felicitous world to which the soul
 Is visitor in sleep, keeps her sublime
 Discouraged eyes; human dismay comes next,
 Slowly; last, sudden, they brighten and grow wide
 With recognition of an altered world,
 Delighted: so woke Urvashi to love.

But, hardly now that luminous inner dawn
 Bridged joy between their eyes, laughter broke in
 And the returning world; for Ménaca,
 Standing a lily in the snows, laughed back
 Those irresistible wheels and spoke like song;—
 She tremulous and glad from bygone fear;
 But all those flower-like came, increasing light,
 Their bosoms quick and panting, bright, like waves
 That under sunshine lift remembering storm.
 And before all Ménaca tremulously
 Smiling: "Whither, O King Pururavus,
 Bear'st thou thy victory? Wilt thou set her
 A golden triumph in thy halls? But she
 Is other than thy marble caryatids
 And austere doors, purity colourless.
 Read not too much thy glory in her eyes.
 Will not that hueless inner stream yet serve
 Where thou wast wont to know thy perfect deeds?
 But give her back, give us our sister back,
 And in return take all thyself with thee."
 So with flushed cheeks and smiling Ménaca.
 And great Pururavus set down the nymph
 In her bright sister's arms and stood awhile
 Stormily calm in vast incertitude,
 Quivering. Then divine Tilôttama:

"O King, O mortal mightier than the Gods!
 For Gods change not their strength, but are of old
 And as of old, and man, though less than these,
 May yet proceed to greater, self-evolved.
 Man, by experience of passion purged,
 His myriad faculty perfecting, widens
 His nature as it rises till it grows
 With God conterminous. For one who tames
 His hot tremulousness of soul unblest
 And feels around him like an atmosphere
 A quiet perfectness of joy and peace,
 He, like the sunflower sole of all the year,
 Images the divine to which he tends:
 So thou, sole among men. And thou today
 Hast a high deed perfected, saved from death
 The great Gods of the solar world the first,
 And saved with them the stars; but her today
 Without whom all that world would grow to shade
 Or grow to fire, but each way cease to live.
 And thou shalt gather strange rewards, O King,
 Hurting thyself with good, and lose thy life
 To have the life of all the solar world,
 Draw infinite gain out of more infinite loss,
 And, for the lowest, endless fame. Today
 Retire nor pluck the slowly-ripening fates;
 Since who anticipates the patient Gods,
 Finds his crown ashes and his empire grief.
 So choose blind Titans in their violent souls
 Unseeing, forfeiting the beautiful world
 For momentary splendours." She was silent,
 And he replied no word, but gathering
 His reins swept from the golden group. His car
 Through those mute Himalayan doors of earth
 And all that silent life before our life

Solitary and great and merciless,
Went groaning down the wind. He, the sole living,
Over the dead deep-plunging precipices
Passed bright and small in a wide dazzling world
Illimitable, where eye flags and ear
Listening feels inhuman loneliness.
He tended towards Gungotri's solemn peaks
And savage glaciers and the caverns pure
Whence Ganges leaps, our mother, virgin-cold.
But ere he plunged into the human vales
And kindlier grandeurs, King Pururavus
Looked back upon a gust of his great heart,
And saw her. On a separate peak, divine,
In blowing raiment and a glory of hair
She stood and watched him go with serious eyes
And a soft wonder in them and a light.
One hand was in her streaming folds, one shaded
Her eyes as if the vision that she saw
Were brighter even than deathless eyes endure.
Over her shoulder pressed a laughing crowd
Of luminous faces. And Pururavus
Staggered as smitten, and shaking wide his reins
Rushed like a star into the infinite air;
So curving downwards on precipitate wheels,
His spirit all a storm, came with the wind
Far-sounding into Ila's peaceful town.

CANTO II

But from the dawn and mountains Urvasie
Went marvelling and glad, not as of old
A careless beam; for an august constraint,
Unfelt before, ruled her extravagant grace
And wayward beauty; and familiar things
Grew strange to her, and to her eyes came mists
Of mortal vision. Love was with her there,
But not of Paradise nor that great guest
Perpetual who makes his golden couch
Between the Opsara's ever-heaving breasts.
For this was rapturous, troubled, self-absorbed,
A gracious human presence which she loved,
And wondered at, and hid deep in her heart.
And whether in the immortal's dance she moved,
A billow, or her fingers like sunbeams
Brightened the harps of heaven, or going out
With the white dawn to bathe in Swerga's streams,
Or in the woods of Eden wandering,
Or happy sitting under peaceful boughs
In a great golden evening, all she did,
Celestial occupations, all she thought
And all she was, though still the same, had changed.
There was a happy trouble in her ways
And movements; her felicitous lashes drooped
With a burden; and all her daily acts
Were as a statue imitating life,
Not single-hearted like the sovran Gods.
Now as the days of heaven went by in quiet
And there was peaceful summer 'mid the Gods,
In Swerga song increased and dances swayed

In multitudinous beauty, jasmine-crowned;
 And often in high Indra's hall the spirits
 Immortal met to watch the shows divine
 Of action and celestial theatre.
 For not of earth alone are delicate arts
 And noble imitations, but in heaven
 Have their rich prototypes. So on that day
 Before a divine audience there was staged
 The Choice of Luxmie. Urvasie enacted,
 The goddess, Ocean's child, and Ménaca
 Was Varunie, and other girls of heaven
 Assembled the august desiring Gods.
 Full strangely sweet those delicate mimics were;
 Moonbeam faces imitated the strength
 And silence of great spirits battle-worn,
 And little hands the awful muniments
 Of empire grasped and powers that shake the world.
 Then with a golden wave of arm sublime
 Ménaca towards the warlike consistory,
 Under half-drooping lashes indicating
 Where calm eternal Vishnu like a cloud
 Sat discus-armed, said to her sister bright:
 " Daughter of Ocean, sister, for whom heaven
 Is passionate, thou hast reviewed the powers
 Eternal and their dreadful beauty scanned,
 And heard their blissful names. Say, unafraid
 Before these listening faces, whom thou lovest
 Above all Gods and more than earth and more
 Than joy of Swerga's streams?" And Urvasie,
 Musing with wide unseeing eyes, replied
 In a far voice: " The King Pururavus."
 Then, as a wind among the leaves, there swept
 A gust of laughter through the assembled Gods,
 A happy summer sound. But not in mirth

Bharuth, the mighty dramatist of heaven,
 Passionate to see his smooth work marred and spell
 Broken of scenic fancies finely-touched:
 "Since thou hast brought the breath of mortal air
 Into the pure solemnities of heaven,
 And since thou givest up to other ends
 Than the one need for which God made thee form,
 Thy being and hast here transferred from earth
 Human failure from the divided soul,
 Marring my great creation, Urvasie,
 I curse thee to possess thy heart's desire.
 Exiled from Swerga's streams and golden groves
 Thou, by terrestrial Ganges or on sad
 Majestic mountains or in troubled towns,
 Enjoy thy love, but hope not here to breathe
 Felicity in regions built for peace
 Of who, erect in their own nature, keep
 Living by fated toils the glorious world."
 He ceased and there was silence of the Gods.
 Then Indra answered, smiling, though ill-pleased:
 "Bharuth, not well nor by the fates allowed
 To exile without limit from the skies
 Who of the skies is part. Her wilt thou banish
 From the felicity of grove and stream,
 Making our Eden empty of her smiles?
 But what felicity in stream or grove
 And she not secret there? And hast thou taxed
 Her passion, yet in passion would'st deface
 The beautiful world because thy work is vain?"
 Bharuth replied, the high poet severe:
 "Irrevocable is the doom pronounced
 Once by my lips. Fates too are born of song.
 But if of limit thou speakest and the term
 By nature fixed to the divorce of her

From the felicity in which she moves,
 Nature that fixed the limit, still effects
 Inevitably its fated ends. For Fate,
 The dim great presence, is but nature made
 Irrevocable in its fruits. Let her
 To the pure banks of sacred Ganges wend.
 There she may keep her exile, from of old
 Intended for perfection of the earth
 Through her sweet change. Heaven too shall flash and grow
 Fairer with her returning feet though changed,—
 Though changed, yet lovelier from beneficence.
 For she will come soft with maternal cheeks
 And flushed from nuptial arms and human-blest
 With touches of the warm delightful earth.”
 He said and Urvashie from the dumb place
 And thoughtful presence of the Gods departed
 Into the breezy noon of Swerga. Under
 Green well-known boughs laden with nameless fruit
 And over blissful swards and perfect flowers
 And through the wandering alleys she arrived
 To heavenly Ganges where it streams o’er stones;
 There from the banks of summer downward stepped,
 One little golden hand gathering her dress
 Above her naked knees, and, lovely, passed
 Through the divine pellucid river on
 To Swerga’s portals, pausing on the slope
 Which goes toward the world. There she looked down
 With yearning eyes far into endless space.
 Behind her stood the green felicitous peaks
 And trembling tops of woods and pulse of blue
 With those calm cloudless summits quivering.
 All heaven was behind her, but she sent
 No look to those eternal seats of joy.
 She down the sunbeams gazed where mountains rose

In snow, the bleak and mighty hills of earth,
 And virgin forests vast, great infant streams
 And cities young in the heroic dawn
 Of history and insurgent human art
 Titanic on the old stupendous hills.
 Towards these she gazed down under eyelids glad.
 And to her gazing came Tilôttama,
 Bright out of heaven, and clasped her quiet hand
 And murmured softly, "Sister, let us go."
 Then they went down into the waiting world,
 The golden women, and through gorges mute
 Past Budricayshwur in the silent snow
 Came silent to Pururavus Urvasie.

For not in Ilian streets Pururavus
 Sojourned, nor in the happy throng of men,
 But with the infinite and the lonely hills.
 For he grew weary of walls and luminous carved
 Imperial pillars bearing up huge weight
 Of architectural stone, and the long street,
 And thoughtful temple wide, and sharp cymbals
 Protecting the august pure place with sound;
 The battled tramp of men, sessions of kings,
 The lightning from sharp weapons, jubilant crash
 Of chariots, and the Veda's mighty chant;
 The bright booths of the merchants, the loud looms
 And the smith's hammer clanging music out,
 And stalwart men driving the patient plow
 Indomitable in fierce breath of noon.
 Of these he now grew weary and the blaze
 Of kingship, its immense and iron toils,
 With one hand shielding in the people's ease,
 With one hand smiting back the tireless foe,
 And difficulty of equal justice cold,

And kind beneficent works harmonious kept
 With terrible control; the father's face,
 The man's heart, the steeled intellect of power
 Insolubly one; and after sleepless nights
 Labouring greatly for a great reward,
 Frequent failure and vigorous success,
 And sweet reward of voices filial grown.
 These that were once his life, he loved no more.
 They held not his desire nor were alive,
 But pale magnificent ghosts out of the past
 With sad obsession closing him from warm
 Life and the future in far sunlight gold.
 For in his heart and in his musing eyes
 There was a light on the cold snows, a blush
 Upon the virgin quiet of the East
 And storm and slowly-lifting lids. Therefore
 He left the city Ilian and plains
 Whence with a mighty motion eastward flows
 Ganges, heroical and young, a swift
 Mother of strenuous nations, nor yet reaches
 Her musing age in ardent deep Bengal.
 He journeyed to the cold north and the hills
 Austere, past Budricayshwur ever north,
 Till, in the sixth month of his pilgrimage
 Uneasy, to a silent place he came
 Within a heaped enormous region piled
 With prone far-drifting hills, huge peaks o'erwhelmed
 Under the vast illimitable snows,—
 Snow on ravine, and snow on cliff, and snow
 Sweeping in strenuous outlines to heaven,
 With distant gleaming vales and turbulent rocks,
 Giant precipices black-hewn and bold
 Daring the universal whiteness; last,
 A mystic gorge into some secret world.

He in that region waste and wonderful
 Sojourned, and morning-star and evening-star
 Shone over him and faded, and immense
 Darkness wrapped the hushed mountain solitudes
 And moonlight's brilliant muse and the cold stars
 And day upon the summits brightening.
 But ere day grew the hero nympholept
 Climbed the immortal summits towards the dawn
 And came with falling evening down and lay
 Watching the marvellous sky, but called not sleep
 That beat her gentle wings over his eyes,
 Nor food he needed who was grown a god.
 And in the seventh month of his waiting long
 Summit or cliff he climbed no more, but added
 To the surrounding hush sat motionless,
 Gazing towards the dim unfathomed gorge.
 Six days he sat and on the seventh they came
 Through the dumb gorge, a breath of heaven, a stir,
 Then Eden's girls stepping with moonbeam feet
 Over the barren rocks and dazzling snows,
 That grew less dazzling, their tresses half unbound
 And delicate raiment girdled enchantingly.
 Silent the perfect presences of heaven
 Came towards him and stood a little away,
 Like flowers waiting for a sunbeam. He
 Stirred not, but without voice, in vision merged,
 Sat, as one sleeping momentarily expects
 The end of a dear dream he sees, and knows
 It is a dream, and quietly resigned
 Waits for the fragile bliss to break or fade.
 Then nearer drew divine Tilôttama
 And stood before his silence statuesque,
 Holding her sister's hand; for she hung back,
 Not as an earthly maiden, cheeks suffused,

Lids drooping, but as men from patience called
 Before supreme felicity hang back,
 A little awed, a little doubtful, fearing
 To enter radiant Paradise, so bright
 It seems; thus she and quailed before her bliss.
 But her sister, extending one bright arm:
 "Pururavus, thou hast conquered and I bring
 No dream into thy life, but Urvasie."
 And at that name the strong Pururavus
 Rose swaying to his feet like one struck blind;
 Or when a great thought flashes through his brain,
 A poet starts up and almost cries aloud
 As at a voice,—so he arose and heard.
 And slowly said divine Tilôttama:
 "Yet, son of Ila, one is man and other
 The Opsaras of heaven, daughters of the sea,
 Unlimited in being, Ocean-like.
 They not to one lord yield nor in one face
 Limit the universe, but like sweet air,
 Water unowned and beautiful common light
 In unrestrained surrender remain pure.
 In patient paths of Nature upon earth
 And over all the toiling stars we fill
 With sacred passion large high-venturing spirits
 And visit them with bliss; so are they moved
 To immense creative anguish, glad if through
 Heart-breaking toil once in bare seasons dawn
 Our golden breasts between their hands or rush
 Our passionate presence on them like a wave.
 In heaven bright-limbed with bodily embrace
 We clasp the Gods, and clasp the souls of men,
 And know with winds and flowers liberty.
 But what hast thou with us or winds or flowers?
 O thou who wast so white, wilt thou not keep

Thy pure and lonely eminence and move
 For ever towards morning like a star?
 Or as thy earthly Ganges rolling down
 Between the homes and passionate deeds of men,
 And bearing many boats and white with oars,
 From all that life quite separate, only lives
 Towards Ocean, so thou doest human work,
 Making a mighty nation, doing high
 And necessary deeds, but, all untouched
 By action, livest in thy soul apart
 And to the immortal zenith climbest pure."
 But he, blind as from dazzling dreams, said low:
 "One I thought spoke far-off of purity
 And whiteness and the human soul in God.
 These things were with me once, but now I see
 The Spring a golden child and shaken fields.
 All beautiful things draw near and come to me.
 I dream upon a woman's glorious breasts,
 And watch the dew-drop and am glad with birds,
 And love the perfect coilings of the snake,
 And cry with fire in the burning trees,
 And am a wave towards desired shores.
 I move to these and move towards her bosom
 And mystic eyes where all these are one dream.
 And what shall God profit me or his glory,
 Who love one small face more than all his worlds?"
 He woke with his own voice. His words that first
 Dreamed like a languid wave, sudden were foam;
 And he beheld her standing and his look
 Grew strong; he yearned towards her like a wave,
 And she received him in her eyes as earth
 Receives the rain. Then bright Tilôttama
 Cried in a shining glory over them:
 "O happy lover and O fortunate loved,

Who make love heavenlier by loss! Ah yet,
 The Gods give no irrecoverable gifts,
 Nor unconditioned, O Pururavus,
 Is highest bliss even to most favoured men.
 And thy deep joy must tremble o'er her with soul
 On guard, all overshadowed by a fear.
 For one year thou shalt know her on the peaks,
 In solitary vastnesses of hills
 And regions snow-besieged; and for one year
 In the green forests populous and free
 Life in sunlight and by delightful streams
 Thou shalt enjoy her; and for one year where
 The busy tramp of men goes ceaseless by,
 Subduing her to lovely human cares:
 And so long after as one law observed
 Save her to thee, O King; for never man
 With Opsara may dwell and both be known:
 Either a rapture she invisible
 Or he a mystic body and mystic soul.
 Reveal not then thy being naked to hers,
 O virgin Ila's son, nor suffer ever
 Light round thy body naked to her eyes,
 Lest day dawn not on thy felicity,
 Sole among men." She left them, shining up
 Into the sunlight, and was lost in noon.
 And King Pururavus stood for a space,
 Like the entranced calm before great winds
 And thunder. Then through all his limbs there flashed
 Youth and the beauty and the warmth of earth
 And joy of her left lonely to his will.
 He moved, he came towards her. She, a leaf
 Before a gust among the nearing trees,
 Cowered. But, all a sea of mighty joy
 Rushing and swallowing up the golden sand,
 With a great cry and glad Pururavus

Seized her and caught her to his bosom thrilled,
Clinging and shuddering. All her wonderful hair
Loosened and the wind seized and bore it streaming
Over the shoulder of Pururavus
And on his cheek a softness. She, o'erborne,
Panting, with inarticulate murmurs lay,
Like a slim tree half seen through driving hail,
Her naked arms clasping his neck, her cheek
And golden throat averted, and wide trouble
In her large eyes bewildered with their bliss.
Amid her wind-blown hair their faces met.
With her sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts
Tumultuous up against his beating heart,
He kissed the glorious mouth of heaven's desire.
So clung they as two shipwrecked in a surge.
Then strong Pururavus, with godlike eyes
Mastering hers, cried tremulous: "O beloved,
O miser of thy rich and happy voice,
One word, one word to tell me that thou lovest."
And Urvasie, all broken on his bosom,
Her godhead in his passion lost, moaned out
From her imprisoned breasts, "My lord, my love!"

CANTO III

So was a goddess won to mortal arms;
And for twelve months he held her on the peaks,
In solitary vastnesses of hills
And regions snow-besieged. There in dim gorge
And tenebrous ravine and on wide snows
Clothed with deserted space, o'er precipices
With the far eagles wheeling under them,
Or where large glaciers watch, or under cliffs
O'er-murmured by the streaming waterfalls,
And later in the pleasant lower hills,
He of her beauty world-desired took joy:
And all earth's silent sublime spaces passed
Into his blood and grew a part of thought.
Twelve months in the green forests populous,
Life in sunlight and by delightful streams
He increased rapture. The green tremulous groves,
And solitary rivers white with birds,
And watered hollow's gleam, and sunny boughs
Gorgeous with peacocks or illumining
Bright bosom of doves, in forests, musing day
Or the great night with roar of many beasts,—
All these were Eden round the glorious pair.
And in their third flower-haunted spring of love
A child was born from golden Urvasie.
But when the goddess from maternal pangs
Woke to the child's sweet face and strange tumult
Of new delight and felt the little hands
Erring about her breasts, passionate she cried:
"How long shall we in woods, Pururavus,
Waste the glad days of cheerful human life?"

What pleasure is in soulless woods and waves?
 But I would go into the homes of men,
 Hear the great sound of cities, watch the eager
 Faces tending to hall and mart, and talk
 With the bright girls of earth, and kiss the eyes
 Of little children, feel smooth floors of stone
 Under my feet and the restraint of walls,
 And eat earth's food from vessels made and drink
 Earth's water cool from jars, and know all joy
 And labour of that blithe and busy world."
 She said, and he with a slight happy smile
 Consented. So to sacred Ganges they
 Came and the virgin's city Ilian.
 But when they neared the mighty destined walls,
 His virgin-mother from her temple pure
 Saw him, and a wild blare of conchs arose.
 Rejoicing to the lion-gates they streamed,
 The people of Pururavus, a glad
 Throng indistinguishable, traders and priests,
 Merchants of many gains and craftsmen fine
 Oblivious of their daily toils; the carver
 Flinging his tool away and hammerless
 The giant smith laughing through his vast beard.
 And little children ran, all over flowers,
 And girls like dawn with a delightful noise
 Of anklets, matrons and old men divine,
 And half a godhead with great glances came
 The large-eyed poets of the Vedic chant;
 Before them, all that multitude divided
 Honouring them. In gleaming armour came,
 And bearing dreadful bows, with sound of swords,
 High lords of sacrifice and aged chiefs
 War-weary and great heroes with mighty tread.
 All these to a high noise of trumpets came.
 They with a wide sound going up to heaven

Welcomed their king, and a soft shower of blooms
 Fell on him as from warlike fields returned.
 Much all they marvelled at his heavenly bride
 And worshipped her, half-awed. And young girls came,
 Daughters of warriors, to great houses wed,
 Sweet faces of delightful laughter, came
 And took into their glad embrace and kissed,
 Enamoured of her smiling mouth, and praised
 Aloud her beauty. With flowers then they bound
 Her soft immortal wrists, and through the gates,
 Labouring in vain to bend great bows, waving
 Far-glancing steel, and up the bridal streets
 Captive the girlish phalanx, bright with swords,
 After the old heroic fashion led.
 They amid trumpets and the vast acclaim
 Of a glad people brought the child of Gods
 To her terrestrial home; through the strong doors
 They lifted, and upon an earthly floor,
 Loosening, let from the gleaming limbs slide down
 Her heavenly vesture; next they brought and flung
 About her sweet insufferable grace
 Mortal habiliments, a clinging robe.
 Over her hair the wifely veil was drawn.
 Thus was the love of all the world confined
 To one man's home. And O too fortunate
 Mortal, who could with those august joys
 Mingle our little happy human pains,
 Subduing a fair goddess from her skies
 To gentle ordinary things, sweet service
 And household tasks making her beautiful,
 And trivial daily words, and kisses kind,
 And all the meaning dear of wife and home!
 Human with earth dwelt golden Urvsie,
 And bore to King Pururavus a race
 Of glorious children, each a shining god.

She loved that great and simple life of old,
 Its marble outlines, strong joys and clear air
 Around the soul, loved and made roseate.
 The sacred city felt a finer life
 Within it; burning inspirations breathed
 From hallowed poets; and architects to grace
 And fancy their immense conceptions toned;
 Numberless heroes emulously drove forth
 And in strong joyous battle rolling back
 The dark barbarian borders, flashed through fields,
 Brilliant, and sages in their souls saw God.
 And from the city of Pururavus
 High influences went; Indus and Ganges
 And all the golden intermediate lands
 Grew with them and a perfect impulse felt.
 Seven years the earth rejoiced in Urvasie.

But in their fortunate heavens the high Gods
 Dwelt infelicitous, losing the old
 Rapture inexplicable and thrill beneath
 Their ancient calm. Therefore not long enduring,
 They in colossal council marble, said
 To that bright sister whom she had loved best,
 "Ménaca!" crying "how long shall one man
 Divide from heaven its most perfect bliss?
 Go down and bring her back, our bright one back,
 And we shall love again our luminous halls."
 She heard and went, with her ethereal robe
 Murmuring about her, to the gates divine,
 And looked into the world, and saw the far
 Titanic Ilian city like a stone
 Sunlit upon the small and distant earth.
 Down from heaven's peaks the daughter of the sea
 Went flashing and upon a breathless eve
 Came to the city of Pururavus,

Air blazing far behind her till she paused.
She over the palace of Pururavus
Stood in shadow. Within the lights yet were;
Still sat the princes and young poets sang
On harps heroical of Urvasie
And strong Pururavus, of Urvasie
The light and lovely spirit golden-limbed,
Son of a virgin strong Pururavus.
"O earth made heaven to Pururavus!
O heaven left earth without sweet Urvasie!
"Rejoice possessing, O Pururavus!
Be glad who art possessed, O Urvasie!
"Behold the parents of the sacrifice!
When they have met, then they together rush
And in their arms the beautiful fire is born.
"Behold the children of the earth and sky!
When they met, then they loved, O then they clasped,
And from their clasp a lovely presence grew.
"A holy virgin's son we hear of thee
Without a father born, Pururavus,
Without a mother lovely Urvasie.
"Hast thou not brought the sacrifice from heaven,
The unquenched, unkindled fire, Pururavus?
Hast thou not brought delightful Urvasie?
"The fires of sacrifice mount ever up:
To their lost heavens they naturally aspire.
Their tops are weighted with a human prayer.
"The soul of love mounts also towards the sky;
Thence came the spark but hardly shall return;
Its wings are weighted with too fierce a fire.
"Rejoice in the warm earth, O lovely pair,
The green strong earth that gave Pururavus.
"Rejoice in the blithe earth, O lovely pair,
The happy earth all flushed with Urvasie.
"As lightning takes the heart with pleasant dread,

So love is of the strong Pururavus.
"As breathes sweet fragrance from the flower oppressed,
So love from thy bruised bosom, Urvasie."
So sang they and the heart rejoiced. Then rose
The princes and went down the long white street,
Each to his home. Soon every sound had faded;
Heaven and a few bright stars possessed the world.
But in a silent place dim with the west
On that last night of the sweet passionate earth,
The goddess with the mortal hero lay.
For over them victorious love still showered
His arrows marble-dinting, not flower-tipped
As our brief fading fires,—naked and large
As heaven the monumental loves of old.
On their rich bed they lay, and the two rams
That once the subtle bright Gundhuras gave
To Urvasie, were near; they were ever
With her and cherished; hardly even she loved
The tender faces of her children more
Than these choice from flocks heavenly: only these
Remained to her of unforgotten skies.
So lay they under those fierce shafts of Love,
And in the arms of strong Pururavus
Once more were those beloved limbs embraced,
Once more, if never once again on earth.
Before he slept, the lord of Urvasie
Clasped her to him and wooed from her tired lips
One kiss, nor in its passion felt farewell.
But the night darkened over the vague town,
And clouds came gradual up, and through the clouds
In thunderless great flashes stealing came
The subtle-souled Gundhuras from the peaks
Of distant Paradise. Thunder rolled out,
And through the walls, in a fierce rush of light,
Entered the thieves of heaven and stole the rams,

And fled with the same lightning. Shuddering
The exile of the skies awoke and knew
Her loss, and with a lamentable cry
Turned to her lord. "Arise, Pururavus!"
She wept, "they take from me my snow-white joys."
And starting from his sleep Pururavus,
In that waking when memory is far
And nature of a man unquestioned rules,
Heard of oppression and a space forgot
Fate and his weak tenure of mighty bliss,
Restored to the great nature of a king.
Wrathful he leaped up and on one swift stride
Reached to his bow. Before 'twas grasped he shuddered,
His soul all smitten with a rushing fear.
Alarmed he turned towards her. Suddenly wide
The whole room stood in splendour manifest,
All lightning, and heroically vast,
In gesture kingly like a statue stayed,
Rose glorious, all a grace of naked limbs,
The hero beautiful, Pururavus,
In that fierce light. Intenser than by day
He for one brilliant moment clear beheld
All the familiar place, the fretted huge
Images on the columns, the high-reared
Walls massively erect and silent floor,
And on the floor the gracious fallen dress
That never should embrace her perfect form,
Lying a glimmer, and each noble curve
Of the strong couch, and delicately distinct
The golden body and the flower-like face:
Beside her with a lovely smile that other,
One small hand pressing back the shining curls
Blown with her speed over her. Then all faded.
Thunder crashed through the heavens jubilant.
For a long while he stood with beating heart

Half-conscious of its loss, and as if waiting
 Another flash, into the dimness gazed
 For those loved outlines that were far away.
 Then with a quiet smile he went and placed
 Where she had lain such a short while ago
 Both hands, expecting her sweet breasts, but found
 Her place all empty to him. Silently
 He lay down whispering to his own heart:
 "She has arisen and her shining dress
 Put round her and gone into the cool alcove
 To fetch sweet water for the heavenly rams,
 And she will stay awhile perhaps to look
 And muse upon the night, and then come back,
 And give them drink, and silently lie down
 Beside me. I shall see her when it dawns."
 And so he slept. But the grey dawn came in
 And raised his lashes. He stretched out his arms
 To find her. Then he knew he was alone.

Even so he would not dwell with his despair.
 "She is but gone," he said, "for a little gone
 Into the infinite silences afar
 To see her golden sisters and revisit
 The streams she knew and those unearthly skies.
 But she will soon come back,—even if her heart
 Would let her linger, mine would draw her back;—
 Come soon and talk to me of all she left,
 And clasp her children, and resume sweet goings
 And happy daily tasks and rooms she loved."
 So, steadfast, he continued kingly toils
 Among a people greatly-destined, giving
 In sacred sessions and assemblies calm
 Counsels far-seeing, magnanimous decrees
 Bronze against Time, and from the judgment seat
 Unblamed sentence or reconciliation large.

And perfect trinity of holy fires
 He kindled for desirable rain, and went
 To concourse of strong men or pleasant crowds,
 Or triumphed in great games armipotent.
 Yet behind all his moments there was void.
 And as when one puts from him desperately
 The thought of an inevitable fate,
 Blinding himself with present pleasures, often
 At a slight sound, a knocking at the door,
 A chance word terrible, or even uncalled
 His heart grows sick with sudden fear, and ghastly
 The face of that dread future through the window
 Looks at him; mute he sits then shuddering:
 So to Pururavus in session holy,
 Or warlike concourse, or alone, speaking,
 Or sitting, often a swift dreadful fear
 Made his life naked like a lightning flash;
 Then his whole being shook and his strong frame,
 As with a fever, and his eyes gazed blind;
 Soon with great breaths he repossessed his soul.
 Long he endured thus, but when shocks of fear
 And brilliant passage of remorseless suns
 And wakeful nights wrestling with memory
 Invisibly had worn his heart, he then
 Going as one desperate, void of thought or aim,
 Into that silent place dim with the west,
 Saw there her dress empty of her, and bed
 Forlorn, and the cold floor where she had lain
 At noon and made life sweet to him with her voice.
 Sometimes as in an upland reservoir
 Built by the hands of early Aryan kings,
 Its banks in secret fretted long go down,
 Suddenly down with resonant collapse,
 Then with a formidable sound the flood
 Descends, heard over all the echoing hills,

And marble cities are o'erwhelmed; so sank
 The courage of the strong Pururavus,
 By memory and anguish overcome
 And thoughts of bliss intolerable. Tears
 Came from him; the unvanquished hero lay
 With outstretched arms and wept. Henceforth his life
 Was with that room. If he appeared in high
 Session, warlike concourse or pleasant crowd,
 Men looked on him as on the silent dead.
 Nor did he linger, but from little stay
 Would silently return and in hushed rooms
 Watch with the little relics left of her,
 Things he had hardly borne to see before,
 Now clasped them often, often kissed, sometimes
 Spoke to them as to sweet and living friends,
 And often over his sleeping children hung.
 Nor did he count the days, nor weep again,
 But looked into the dawn with tearless eyes.
 And all the people mourned for their great king,
 Silently watching him, and many murmured:
 "This is not he, the King Pururavus,
 Hero august, who his impetuous soul
 Ruled like a calm and skilful charioteer,
 And was the virgin Ila's son, our king.
 Would that the enemy's war-cry now might rush
 Against our gates and all the air be sound.
 Surely he would arise and lift his bow,
 And his swift chariot hurling through the gates
 Advance upon them like a sea, and triumph,
 And be himself among the rushing wheels."
 So they would murmur grieving. But the king
 When the bright months brought round a lustier earth,
 Felt over his numbed soul some touch of flowers,
 And rose a little from his grief, and lifted
 His eyes against the stars. Then he said low:

"I was not wont so quickly to despair.
 O hast thou left me and art lost in light,
 Cruel, between the shining hemispheres?
 Yet even there I will pursue my joy.
 Though all the great immortals jealously
 Encompass round with shields thy golden limbs,
 I may clash through them yet, or my strong patience
 Will pluck my love down from her distant stars.
 Still am I Ila's son, Pururavus,
 That passionless pure strength though lost, though fallen
 From the armed splendid soul which once I was."
 So saying he to the hall of session strode,
 Mightily like a king, a marble place
 With wide Titanic arches imminent,
 And from the brooding pillars seized a shell
 And blew upon it. Like a storm the sound
 Through Pratisthana's streets was blown. Forth came
 From lintel proud and happy threshold low
 The people pouring out. Majestic chiefs
 And strong war-leaders and old famous men
 And mighty poets first; behind them streamed
 The Ilian people like driving rain, and filled
 With faces the immeasurable hall.
 And over them the beautiful great king
 Rose bright; anticipations wonderful
 Of immortality flashed through his eyes
 And round his brow's august circumference.
 "My people whom I made, I go from you;
 And what shall I say to you, Ilian people,
 Who know my glory and know my grief? Now I
 Endure no more the desolate wide rooms
 And gardens empty of her. I will depart
 And find her under imperishable trees
 Or secret beside streams. But since I go
 And leave my work behind and a young nation
 With destiny like an uncertain dawn

Over it—Ayûs her son, I give you. He
 By beauty and strength incomparable shall rule.
 Lo, I have planted earth with deeds and made
 The widest heavens my monument, have brought
 From Paradise the sempiternal fire
 And warred in heaven among the warring Gods.
 O People, you have shared my famous actions
 Done in a few great years of earthly life,
 The battles I fought, edifications vast,
 And perfect institutes that I have framed.
 High things we have done together, O my people.
 But now I go to claim back from the Gods
 Her they have taken from me, my dear reward.”
 He spoke and all the nation listened, dumb.
 Then was brought forth the bud of Urvasie,
 With Vedic verse intoned and Ganges pure
 Was crowned a king, and empire on his curls
 Established. But Pururavus went forth,
 Through ranks of silent people and gleaming arms,
 With the last cloud of sunset up the fields
 And darkening meadows. And from Ila’s rock,
 And from the temple of Ila virginal,
 A rushing splendour wonderfully arose
 And shone all round the great departing king.
 He in that light turned and saw under him
 The mighty city, luminous and vast,
 Colossally up-piled towards the heavens,
 Temple and street and palace, and the sea
 Of sorrowing faces and sad grieving eyes;
 A moment saw, and disappeared from light
 Into forest. Then a loud wail arose
 From Pratisthana, as if barbarous hordes
 Were in the streets and all its temples huge
 Rising towards heaven in disastrous fire,
 But he unlistening into darkness went.

CANTO IV

Through darkness and immense dim night he went
Mid phantom outlines of approaching trees,
And all the day in green leaves, till he came
To peopled forests and sweet clamorous streams
And marvellous shining meadows where he lived
With Urvasie his love in seasons old.
These like domestic faces waiting were.
He knew each wind-blown tree, each different field;
And could distinguish all the sounding rivers
Each by its own voice and peculiar flow.
Here were the happy shades where they had lain
Inarmed and murmuring, here half-lustrous groves
Still voiceful with a sacred sound at noon,
And these the rivers from her beauty bright.
There straying in field and forest he to each
Familiar spot so full of her would speak,
Pausing by banks and memorable trees.
“O sacred fig-tree, under thee she paused
Musing amid her tresses, and her eyes
Were sweet and grave. And, O delicious shade,
Thou hast experienced brightness from her feet,
O cool and dark green shelterer, perfect place!
And lo! the boughs all ruinous towards earth
With blossoms. Here she lay, her arms thrown back,
Smiling up to me, and the flowers rained
Upon her lips and eyes and bosom bare.
And here a secret opening where she stood
Waiting in narrow twilight; round her all
Was green and secret with a mystic, dewy
Half invitation into emerald worlds.

O river, from thee she moved towards the glade
 Breathing and wet and fresh as if a flower
 All bare from rain. And thou, great holy glade,
 Sawest her face maternal o'er her child."
 Then ceasing he would wait and listen, half
 Expecting her. But all was silent; only
 Perhaps a bird darted bright-winged away,
 Or a grey snake slipped through the brilliant leaves.
 Thus wandering, thus in every mindful place
 Renewing old forgotten scenes that rose,
 Gleam after gleam, upon his mind, as stars
 Return at night; thus drawing from his heart
 Where they lay covered, old sweet incidents
 To live before his eyes; thus calling back
 Uncertain moods, brief moments of her face,
 And transient postures strangely beautiful,
 Pleasures, and little happy mists of tears
 Heart-freeing, he, materializing dreams,
 Upon her very body almost seized.
 Always a sense of imperfection slipped
 Between him and that passionate success.
 Therefore he murmured at last unsatisfied:
 "She is not here; though every mystic glade
 And sunbright pasture breathe alone of her
 And quiver as with her presence, I find not
 Her very limbs, her very face; yet dreamed
 That here infallibly I should restrain
 Her fugitive feet or hold her by the robe.
 O once she was the luminous soul of these,
 And in her body lived the summer and spring
 And seed and blossoming, ripening and fall,
 Hiding of Beauty in the wood and glen,
 And flashing out into the sunlit fields
 All flowers and laughter. All the happy moods
 And all the beautiful amorous ways of earth

She was; but they now seem only her dress
Left by her. Therefore, O ye seaward rivers,
O forests, since ye have deceived my hope,
I go from you to dazzling cruel ravines
And find her on inclement mountains pure."

Then northward blown upon a storm of hope
The hero self-discrowned, Pururavus,
Went swiftly up the burning plains and through
The portals of the old Saivaalic hills
To the inferior heights, nor lingered long,
Though pulsing with fierce memories, though thrilled
With shocks of a great passion touching earth;
But plunged o'er difficult gorge and prone ravine
And rivers thundering between dim walls,
Driven by immense desire, until he came
To dreadful silence of the peaks and trod
Regions as vast and lonely as his love.
Then with a confident sublime appeal
He to the listening summits stretched his hands:
"O desolate strong Himalaya, great
Thy peaks alone with heaven and dreadful hush
In which the Soul of all the world is felt
Meditating creation! Thou, O mountain,
My bridal chamber wast. On thee we lay
With summits towards the moon or with near stars
Watching us in some wild inhuman vale,
Thy silence over us like a coverlid
Or a far avalanche for bridal song.
Lo, she is fled into your silences!
I come to you, O mountains, with a heart
Desolate like you, like you snow-swept, and stretch
Towards your solemn summits kindred hands.
Give back to me, O mountains, give her back."
He ceased and Himalaya bent towards him, white.

The mountains seemed to recognize a soul
Immense as they, reaching as they to heaven
And capable of infinite solitude.
Long he, in meditation deep immersed,
Strove to dissolve his soul among the hills
Into the thought of Urvasie. The snow
Stole down from heaven and touched his cheek and hair,
The storm-blast from the peaks leaped down and smote
But woke him not, and the white drops in vain
Froze in his locks or crusted all his garb.
For he lived only with his passionate heart.
But as the months with slow unnoticed tread
Passed o'er the hills nor brought sweet change of spring
Nor autumn wet with dew, a voice at last
Moved from far heavens, other than our sky.
And he arose as one impelled and came
Past the supreme great ridges northward, came
Into the wonderful land far up the world
Dim-looming, where the Northern Kurus dwell,
The ancients of the world, invisible,
Among forgotten mists. Through mists he moved
Feeling a sense of unseen cities, hearing
No sound, nor seeing face, but conscious ever
Of an immense traditionary life
Throbbing round him and dreams historical.
For as he went, old kingly memories surged,
And with vast forward faces driving came
Origins and stabilities and empires,
Huge passionate creations, impulses
National realizing themselves in stone.
Lastly with rolling of the mists afar
He saw beneath him the primeval rocks
Plunge down into the valley, and upsoar
To light wide thoughtful domes and measureless

Ramparts, and mid them in a glory walk
 The ancients of the world with eyes august.
 Next towards the sun he looked and saw enthroned
 Upon the summit one whose regal hair
 Crowned her, and purple in waves down to her feet
 Flowed, Indira, the goddess, Ocean's child,
 Giver of empire who all beauty keeps
 Between her hands, all glory, all wealth, all power.
 Severe and beautiful she leaned her face.
 "What passion, Ilian Pururavus,
 Has led thee here to my great capital
 And ancient men in the forgotten mists,
 The fathers of the Aryan race? Of glory
 Enamoured hast thou come, or for thy people
 Empire soliciting? But other beauty
 Is on thy brow and light no longer mine.
 Yet not for self wast thou of virgin born,
 Perfect, and the aerial paths of gods
 Permitted to thy steps; nor for themselves,
 But to the voice of Vedic litanies,
 Sacredly placed are the dread crowns of Kings
 For bright felicities and cruel toils.
 And thou, O Ilian Pururavus,
 For passion dost thou leave thy strenuous grandeurs,
 A nation's destinies, and hast not feared
 The sad inferior Ganges lapsing down
 With mournful rumour through the shades of Hell?"
 Then with calm eyes the hero Ilian:
 "O Goddess, patroness of Aryasthan,
 Lover of banyan and of lotus, I
 Not from the fear of Hell or hope of Heaven
 Do good or ill. Reigning I reigned o'er self,
 And with a kingly soul did kingly deeds.
 Now driven by a termless wide desire
 I wander over snow and countries vague."

And like a viol Luxmie answered him:
"Sprung of the moon, thy grandsire's fault in thee
Yet lives; but since thy love is singly great,
Doubtless thou shalt possess thy whole desire.
Yet hast thou maimed the future and discrowned
The Aryan people; for though Ila's sons,
In Hustina, the city of elephants,
And Indraprutha, future towns, shall rule
Drawing my peoples to one sceptre, at last
Their power by excess of beauty falls,—
Thy sin, Pururavus—of beauty and love:
And this the land divine to impure grasp
Yields of barbarians from the outer shores."
She ceased and the oblivious mists rolled down.
But the strong hero uncrowned, Pururavus,
Eastward, all dreaming with his great desire,
Wandered as when a man in sleep arises,
And goes into the night, and under stars
Through the black spaces moves, nor knows his feet
Nor where they guide him, but dread unseen power
Walks by him and leads his unerring steps
To some weird forest or gaunt mountain-side;
There he awakes, a horror in his soul,
And shudders alien amid places strange.
So wandered, driven by an unknown power,
Pururavus. Over hushed dreadful hills
And snows more breathless to the quiet banks
Of a wide lake mid rocks and bending woods
He came, and saw calm mountains over it,
And knew in his awed heart the hill of God,
Coilas, and Mainaac with its summits gold.
Awed he in heart, yet with a quicker stride
He moved and eyes of silent joy, like one
Who coming from long travel, sees the old

Village and children's faces at the doors.
In a wild faery place where mountain streams
Glimmer from the dim rocks and meet the lake
Amid a wrestle of tangled trees and heaped
Moss-grown disordered stones, and all the water
Is hidden with its lotuses and sways
Shimmering between leaves or strains through bloom,
She sat, the mother of the Aryans, white
With a sublime pallor beneath her hair.
Musing, with wide creative brows, she sat
In a slight lovely dress fastened with flowers,
All heaped with her large tresses. Golden swans
Preened in the waters by her dipping feet.
One hand propped her fair marble cheek, the other
The mystic lotus hardly held. Seeing her
Pururavus bent to her and adored.
And she looked up and musing towards him
Said low: "O son, I knew thy steps afar.
Of me thou wast; for as I suffered rapture,
Invaded by the sea of images
Breaking upon me from all winds, and saw
Indus and Ganges with prophetic mind,
A virginal impulse gleamed from my bosom
And on the earth took beauty and form. I saw
Thee from that glory issue and rejoiced.
But now thou comest quite discrowned. From me,
O son, thou hadst the impulse beautiful
That made thy soul all colour. For I strive
Towards the insufferable heights and flash
With haloes of that sacred light intense.
But lo! the spring and all its flowers, and lo!
How bright the Soma juice. What golden joys,
What living passions, what immortal tears!
I lift the veil that hides the Immortal—Ah!

My lids faint. Ah! the veil was lovelier.
My flowers wither in that height, my swan
Spreads not his wings felicitous so far.
O one day I shall turn from the great verse
And marble aspiration to sing sweetly
Of lovers and the pomps of wealth and wine
And warm delights and warm desires and earth.
O mine own son, Pururavus, I fall
By thy vast failure from my dazzling skies."
And Ila's son made answer, "O white-armed,
O mother of the Aryans, of my life
Creatress! fates colossal overrule.
But lo! I wander like a wave, nor find
Limit to the desire that wastes my soul."
Then with a sweet immortal smile the mother
Gave to him in the hollow of her hand
Wonderful water of the lake. He drank,
And understood infinity, and saw
Time like a snake coiling among the stars;
And earth he saw, and mortal nights and days
Grew to him moments, and his limbs became
Undying and his thoughts as marble endured.
Then to the hero deified the goddess,
"O strong immortal, now pursue thy joy:
Yet first rise up the peaks of Coilas; there
The Mighty Mother sits, whose sovran voice
Shall ratify to thee thy future fair,"
Said and caressed his brow with lips divine.
And bright Pururavus rose up the hill
Towards the breathless summit. Thence, enshrined
In deep concealing glories, came a voice,
And clearer he discerned as one whose eyes,
Long cognizant of darkness, coming forth,
Grow gradually habituated to light,

The calm compassionate face, the heaven-wide brow,
 And the robust great limbs that bear the world.
 Prophetical and deep her voice came down:
 "Thou then hast failed, bright soul; but God blames not
 Nor punishes. Impartially he deals
 To every strenuous spirit its chosen reward.
 And since no work, however maimed, no smallest
 Energy added to the mighty sum
 Of action fails of its exact result,
 Empire shall in thy line and forceful brain
 Persist, the boundless impulse towards rule
 Of grandiose souls perpetually recur,
 And minds immense and personalities
 With battle and with passion and with storm
 Shall burn through Aryan history, the speech
 Of ages. In thy line the Spirit Supreme
 Shall bound existence with one human form;
 In Mathura and ocean Dwarka Man
 Earthly perfectibility of soul
 Example: son of thy line and eulogist,
 The vast clear poet of the golden verse,
 Whose song shall be as wide as is the world.
 But all by huge self-will or violence marred
 Of passionate uncontrol; if pure, their work
 By touch of later turbulent hands unsphered
 Or fames by legend stained. Upon my heights
 Breathing God's air, strong as the sky and pure,
 Dwell only Ixvaacou's children; destined theirs
 Heaven's perfect praise, earth's sole unequalled song.
 But thou, O Ila's son, take up thy joy.
 For thee in sweet Gundhurva world eternal
 Rapture and clasp unloosed of Urvasie,
 Till the long night when God asleep shall fall."

Ceased the great voice and strong Pururavus
 Glad of his high reward, however dearly
 Purchased, purchased with infinite downfall,
 With footing now divine went up the world.
 Mid regions sweet and peaks of milk-white snow
 And lovely corners and delicious lakes,
 He saw a road all sunlight and the gates
 Of the Gundhuras' home. O never ship
 From Ocean into Ocean erring knew
 Such joy through all its patient sails at sight
 Of final haven near as the tried heart
 Of earth's successful son at that fair goal.
 Towards the gates he hastened, and one bright
 With angel face who at those portals stood
 Cried down, "We wait for thee, Pururavus."
 Then to his hearing musical, the hinges
 Called; he beheld the subtle faces look
 Down on him and the crowd of luminous forms,
 And entered to immortal sound of lyres.
 Up through the streets a silver cry went on
 Before him of high instruments. From all
 The winds the marvellous musicians pressed
 To welcome that immortal lover. One
 Whose pure limned brows aerial wore by right
 Faery authority, stood from the crowd.
 "O Ila's son, far-famed Pururavus,
 Destined to joys by mortals all unhopèd!
 Move to thy sacred glories as a star
 Into its destined place, shine over us
 Here greatest as upon thy greener earth."
 They through the thrilling regions musical
 Led him and marvelled at him and praised with song
 His fair sublimity of form and brow
 And warlike limbs and grace heroical.

He heeded not, for all his soul was straining
With expectation of a near delight.
His eyes that sought her ever, beheld a wall
Of mighty trees and, where they arched to part,
Those two of all their sisters brightest rise,
One blithe as is a happy brook, the other
With her grave smile; and each took a strong hand
In her soft clasp, and led him to a place
Distinct mid faery-leaved ethereal trees
And magic banks and sweet low curves of hills,
And over all the sunlight like a charm.
There by a sounding river 'downward thrown
From under low green-curtaining boughs was she.
Mute she arose and with wide quiet eyes
Came towards him. In their immortal looks
Was a deep feeling too august for joy,
The sense that all eternity must follow
One perfect moment. Then that comrade bright
With slow grave smile, "O after absence wide
Who meet and shall not sunder any more.
Till slumber of the Supreme, strong be your souls
To bear unchanging rapture; strong you were
By patience to compel unwilling Gods."
And they were left alone in that clear world.
Then all his soul towards her leaning, took
Pururavus into his clasp and felt,
Seriously glad, the golden bosom on his
Of Urvsie, his love; so pressing back
The longed-for sacred face, lingering he kissed.
Then Love in his sweet heavens was satisfied.
But far below through silent mighty space
The green and strenuous earth abandoned rolled.

LOVE AND DEATH

Love and Death

In woodlands of the bright and early world,
When love was to himself yet new and warm
And stainless, played like morning with a flower
Ruru with his young bride Priyumvada.
Fresh-cheeked and dew-eyed white Priyumvada
Opened her budded heart of crimson bloom
To love, to Ruru; Ruru, a happy flood
Of passion round a lotus dancing thrilled,
Blinded with his soul's waves Priyumvada.
To him the earth was a bed for this sole flower,
To her all the world was filled with his embrace.
Wet with new rains the morning earth, released
From her fierce centuries and burning suns,
Lavished her breath in greenness; poignant flowers
Thronged all her eager breast, and her young arms
Cradled a childlike bounding life that played
And would not cease, nor ever weary grew
Of her bright promise; for all was joy and breeze
And perfume, colour and bloom and ardent rays
Of living, and delight desired the world.
Then Earth was quick and pregnant tamelessly,
A free and unvalled race possessed her plains
Whose hearts uncramped by bonds, whose unspoiled thoughts
At once replied to light. Foisoned the fields;
Lonely and rich the forests and the swaying
Of those unnumbered tops affected men
With thoughts to their vast music kin. Undammed
The virgin rivers moved towards the sea,
And mountains yet unseen and peoples vague
Winged young imagination like an eagle

To strange beauty remote. And Ruru felt
 The sweetness of the early earth as sap
 All through him, and short life an æon made
 By boundless possibility, and love,
 Sweetest of all unfathomable love,
 A glory untired. As a bright bird comes flying
 From airy extravagance to his own home,
 And breasts his mate, and feels her all his goal,
 So from boon sunlight and the fresh chill wave
 Which swirled and lapped between the slumbering fields,
 From forest pools and wanderings mid leaves
 Through emerald ever-new discoveries,
 Mysterious hillsides ranged and buoyant-swift
 Races with our wild brothers in the meads,
 Came Ruru back to the white-bosomed girl,
 Strong-winged to pleasure. She all fresh and new
 Rose to him, and he plunged into her charm.
 For neither to her honey and poignancy
 Artlessly interchanged, nor any limit
 To the sweet physical delight of her
 He found. Her eyes like deep and infinite wells
 Lured his attracted soul, and her touch thrilled
 Not lightly, though so light; the joy prolonged
 And sweetness of the lingering of her lips
 Was every time a nectar of surprise
 To her lover; her smooth-gleaming shoulder bared
 In darkness of her hair showed jasmine-bright,
 While her kissed bosom by rich tumults stirred
 Was a moved sea that rocked beneath his heart,
 Then when her lips had made him blind, soft siege
 Of all her unseen body to his rule
 Betrayed the ravishing realm of her white limbs,
 An empire for the glory of a God.
 He knew not whether he loved most her smile,

Her causeless tears or little angers swift,
 Whether held wet 'against him from the bath
 Among her kindred lotuses, her cheeks
 Soft to his lips and dangerous happy breasts
 That vanquished all his strength with their desire,
 Meeting his absence with her sudden face,
 Or when the leaf-hid bird at night complained
 Near their wreathed arbour on the moonlit lake,
 Sobbing delight out from her heart of bliss,
 Or in his clasp of rapture laughing low
 Of his close bosom bridal-glad and pleased
 With passion and this fiery play of love,
 Or breaking off like one who thinks of grief,
 Wonderful melancholy in her eyes
 Grown liquid and with wayward sorrow large.
 Thus he in her found a warm world of sweets,
 And lived of ecstasy secure, nor deemed
 Any new hour could match that early bliss.
 But Love has joys for spirits born divine
 More bleeding-lovely than his thornless rose.
 That day he had left, while yet the east was dark,
 Rising, her bosom and into the river
 Swam out, exulting in the sting and swift
 Sharp-edged desire around his limbs, and sprang
 Wet to the bank, and streamed into the wood.
 As a young horse upon the pastures glad
 Feels greensward and the wind along his mane
 And arches as he goes his neck, so went
 In an immense delight of youth the boy
 And shook his locks, joy-crested. Boundlessly
 He revelled in swift air of life, a creature
 Of wide and vigorous morning. Far he strayed
 Tempting for flower and fruit branches in heaven,
 And plucked, and flung away, and brighter chose,

Seeking comparisons for her bloom; and followed
 New streams, and touched new trees, and felt slow beauty
 And leafy secret change; for the damp leaves,
 Grey-green at first, grew pallid with the light
 And warmed with consciousness of sunshine near;
 Then the whole daylight wandered in, and made
 Hard tracts of splendour, and enriched all hues.
 But when a happy sheltered heat he felt
 And heard contented voice of living things
 Harmonious with the noon, he turned and swiftly
 Went homeward yearning to Priyumvada,
 And near his home emerging from green leaves
 He laughed towards the sun: "O father Sun,"
 He cried, "how good it is to live, to love!
 Surely our joy shall never end, nor we
 Grow old, but like bright rivers or pure winds
 Sweetly continue, or revive with flowers,
 Or live at least as long as senseless trees."
 He dreamed, and said with a soft smile: "Lo, she!
 And she will turn from me with angry tears
 Her delicate face more beautiful than storm
 Or rainy moonlight. I will follow her,
 And soothe her heart with sovereign flatteries;
 Or rather all tyranny exhaust and taste
 The beauty of her anger like a fruit,
 Vexing her soul with helplessness; then soften
 Easily with quiet undenied demand
 Of heart insisting upon heart; or else
 Will reinvest her beauty bright with flowers,
 Or with my hands her little feet persuade.
 Then will her face be like a sudden dawn,
 And flower compelled into reluctant smiles."
 He had not ceased when he beheld her. She,
 Tearing a jasmine bloom with waiting hands,

Stood drooping, petulant, but heard at once
His footsteps and before she was aware,
A sudden smile of exquisite delight
Leaped to her mouth, and a great blush of joy
Surprised her cheeks. She for a moment stood
Beautiful with her love before she died;
And he laughed towards her. With a pitiful cry
She paled; moaning, her stricken limbs collapsed.
But petrified, in awful dumb surprise,
He gazed; then waking with a bound was by her,
All panic expectation. As he came,
He saw a brilliant flash of coils evade
The sunlight, and with hateful gorgeous hood
Darted into green safety, hissing, death.
Voiceless he sank beside her and stretched out
His arms and desperately touched her face,
As if to attract her soul to live, and sought
Beseeching with his hands her bosom. O, she
Was warm, and cruel hope pierced him; but pale
As jasmines fading on a girl's sweet breast
Her cheek was, and forgot its perfect rose.
Her eyes that clung to sunlight yet, with pain
Were large and feebly round his neck her arms
She lifted and, desiring his pale cheek
Against her bosom, sobbed out piteously,
"Ah, love!" and stopped heart-broken; then, "O Love!
Alas the green dear home that I must leave
So early! I was so glad of love and kisses,
And thought that centuries would not exhaust
The deep embrace. And I have had so little
Of joy and the wild day and throbbing night,
Laughter, and tenderness, and strife and tears.
I have not numbered half the brilliant birds
In one green forest, nor am familiar grown

With sunrise and the progress of the eves,
Nor have with plaintive cries of birds made friends,
Cuckoo and rainlark and love-speak-to-me.
I have not learned the names of half the flowers
Around me; so few trees know me by my name;
Nor have I seen the stars so very often
That I should die. I feel a dreadful hand
Drawing me from the touch of thy warm limbs
Into some cold vague mist, and all black night
Descends towards me. I no more am thine,
But go I know not where, and see pale shapes
And gloomy countries and that terrible stream.
O Love, O Love, they take me from thee far,
And whether we shall find each other ever
In the wide dreadful territory of death,
I know not. Or thou wilt forget me quite,
And life compel thee into other arms.
Ah, come with me! I cannot bear to wander
In that cold cruel country all alone,
Helpless and terrified, or sob by streams
Denied sweet sunlight and by thee unloved.”
Slower her voice came now, and over her cheek
Death paused; then, sobbing like a little child
Too early from her bounding pleasures called,
The lovely discontented spirit stole
From her warm body white. Over her leaned
Ruru, and waited for dead lips to move.
Still in the greenwood lay Priyumvada,
And Ruru rose not from her, but with eyes
Emptied of glory hung above his dead,
Only, without a word, without a tear.
Then the crowned wives of the great forest came,
They who had fed her from maternal breasts,
And grieved over the lovely body cold,

And bore it from him; nor did he entreat
One last look nor one kiss, nor yet denied
What he had loved so well. They the dead girl
Into some distant greenness bore away.

But Ruru, while the stillness of the place
Remembered her, sat without voice. He heard
Through the great silence that was now his soul,
The forest sounds, a squirrel's leap through leaves,
The cheeping of a bird just overhead,
A peacock with his melancholy cry
Complaining far away, and tossings dim
And slight unnoticeable stir of trees.
But all these were to him like distant things
And he alone in his heart's void. And yet
No thought he had of her so lately lost.
Rather far pictures, trivial incidents
Of that old life before her delicate face
Had lived for him, dumbly distinct like thoughts
Of men that die, kept with long pomps his mind
Excluding the dead girl. So still he was,
The birds flashed by him with their swift small wings,
Fanning him. Then he moved, then rigorous
Memory through all his body shuddering
Awoke, and he looked up and knew the place,
And recognised greenness immutable,
And saw old trees and the same flowers still bloom.
He felt the bright indifference of earth
And all the lonely uselessness of pain.
Then lifting up the beauty of his brow
He spoke, with sorrow pale: "O grim cold death!
But I will not like ordinary men
Sate thee with cries, and falsely woo thee,
And make my grief thy theatre, who lie

Prostrate beneath thy thunderbolts and make
 Night witness of their moans, shuddering and crying
 When sudden memories pierce them like swords,
 And often starting up as at a thought
 Intolerable, pace a little, then
 Sink down exhausted by brief agony.
 O secrecy terrific, darkness vast,
 At which we shudder! Somewhere, I know not where,
 Somehow, I know not how, I shall confront
 Thy gloom, tremendous spirit, and seize with hands
 And prove what thou art and what man." He said,
 And slowly to the forests wandered. There
 Long months he travelled between grief and grief,
 Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,
 Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.
 And his heart cried in him as when a fire
 Roars through wide forests and the branches cry
 Burning towards heaven in torture glorious.
 So burned, immense, his grief within him; he raised
 His young pure face all solemnised with pain,
 Voiceless. Then Fate was shaken, and the Gods
 Grieved for him, of his silence grown afraid.
 Therefore from peaks divine came flashing down
 Immortal Agni and to the uswutth-tree
 Cried in the Voice that slays the world: "O tree
 That liftest thy enormous branches able
 To shelter armies, more than armies now
 Shelter, be famous, house a brilliant God.
 For the grief grows in Ruru's breast up-piled,
 As wrestles with its anguished barricades
 In silence an impending flood, and Gods
 Immortal grow afraid. For earth alarmed
 Shudders to bear the curse lest her young life
 Pale with eclipse and all-creating love
 Be to mere pain condemned. Divert the wrath

Into thy boughs, Uswuttha—thou shalt be
 My throne—glorious, though in eternal pain,
 Yet worth much pain to harbour divine fire.”
 So ended the young pure destroyer’s voice,
 And the dumb god consented silently.
 In the same noon came Ruru; his mind had paused,
 Lured for a moment by soft wandering gleams
 Into forgetfulness of pain; for thoughts
 Gentle and near-eyed whispering memories
 So sweetly came, his blind heart dreamed she lived.
 Slow the uswuttha-tree bent down its leaves,
 And smote his cheek, and touched his heavy hair.
 And Ruru turned illumined. For a moment,
 One blissful moment he had felt ’t was she.
 So had she often stolen up and touched
 His curls with her enamoured fingers small,
 Lingering, while the wind smote him with her hair
 And her quick breath came to him like spring. Then he,
 Turning, as one surprised with heaven, saw
 Ready to his swift passionate grasp her bosom
 And body sweet expecting his embrace.
 Oh, now saw her not, but the guilty tree
 Shrinking; then grief back with a double crown
 Arose and stained his face with agony.
 Nor silence he endured, but the dumb force
 Ascetic and inherited, by sires
 Fierce-musing earned, from the boy’s bosom blazed.
 “O uswuttha-tree, wantonly who hast mocked
 My anguish with the wind, but thou no more
 Have joy of the cool wind nor green delight,
 But live thy guilty leaves in fire, so long
 As Aryan wheels by thy doomed shadow vast
 Thunder to war, nor bless with cool wide waves
 Lyric Saruswathi nations impure.”

He spoke, and the vast tree groaned through its leaves,
 Recognising its fate; then smouldered; lines
 Of living fire rushed up the girth and hissed
 Serpentine in the unconsuming leaves;
 Last, all Hutashan in his chariot armed
 Sprang on the boughs and blazed into the sky,
 And wailing all the great tormented creature
 Stood wide in agony; one half was green
 And earthly, the other a weird brilliance
 Filled with the speed and cry of endless flame.
 But he with the fierce rushing-out of power
 Shaken and that strong grasp of anguish flung
 His hands out to the sun; "Priyumvada!"
 He cried, and at that well-loved sound there dawned
 With overwhelming sweetness miserable
 Upon his mind the old delightful times
 When he had called her by her liquid name,
 Where the voice loved to linger. He remembered
 The chompuc bushes where she turned away
 Half-angered, and his speaking of her name
 Masterfully as to a lovely slave
 Rebellious who has erred; at that the slow
 Yielding of her small head, and after a little
 Her sliding towards him and beautiful
 Propitiating body as she sank down
 With timid graspings deprecatingly
 In prostrate warm surrender, her flushed cheeks
 Upon his feet and little touches soft;
 Or her long name uttered beseechingly,
 And the swift leap of all her body to him,
 And eyes of large repentance, and the weight
 Of her wild bosom and lips unsatisfied;
 Or hourly call for little trivial needs,
 Or sweet unneeded wanton summoning,

Daily appeal that never staled nor lost
 Its sudden music, and her lovely speed,
 Sedulous occupation left, quick-breathing,
 With great glad eyes and eager parted lips;
 Or in deep quiet moments murmuring
 That name like a religion in her ear,
 And her calm look compelled to ecstasy;
 Or to the river luring her, or breathed
 Over her dainty slumber, or secret sweet
 Bridal outpantings of her broken name.
 All these as rush unintermitting waves
 Upon a swimmer overborne, broke on him
 Relentless, things too happy to be endured,
 Till faint with the recalled felicity
 Low he moaned out: "O pale Priyuvada!
 O dead fair flower! yet living to my grief!
 But I could only slay the innocent tree,
 Powerless when power should have been. Not such
 Was Bhrigu from whose sacred strength I spring,
 Nor Bhrigu's son, my father, when he blazed
 Out from Puloma's side, and burning, blind,
 Fell like a tree the ravisher unjust.
 But I degenerate from such sires. O Death
 That showest not thy face beneath the stars,
 But comest masked, and on our dear ones seizing
 Fearest to wrestle equally with love!
 Nor from thy gloomy house any come back
 To tell thy way. But O, if any strength
 In lover's constancy to torture dwell
 Earthward to force a helping god and such
 Ascetic force be born of lover's pain,
 Let my dumb pangs be heard. Whoe'er thou art,
 O thou bright enemy of Death, descend
 And lead me to that portal dim. For I

Have burned in fires cruel as the fire
 And lain upon a sharper couch than swords."
 He ceased, and heaven thrilled, and the far blue
 Quivered as with invisible downward wings.

But Ruru passioned on, and came with eve
 To secret grass and a green opening moist
 In a cool lustre. Leaned upon a tree
 That bathed in faery air and saw the sky
 Through branches, and a single parrot loud
 Screamed from its top, there stood a golden boy,
 Half-naked, with bright limbs all beautiful—
 Delicate they were, in sweetness absolute:
 For every gleam and every soft strong curve
 Magically compelled the eye, and smote
 The heart to weakness. In his hands he swung
 A bow—not such as human archers use:
 For the string moved and murmured like many bees,
 And nameless fragrance made the casual air
 A peril. He on Ruru that fair face
 Turned, and his steps with lovely gesture chained.
 "Who art thou here, in forests wandering,
 And thy young exquisite face is solemnised
 With pain? Luxuriously the Gods have tortured
 Thy heart to see such dreadful glorious beauty
 Agonize in thy lips and brilliant eyes:
 As tyrants in the fierceness of others' pangs
 Joy and feel strong, clothing with brilliant fire,
 Tyrants in Titan lands. Needs must her mouth
 Have been pure honey and her bosom a charm,
 Whom thou desirest seeing not the green
 And common lovely sounds hast quite forgot."
 And Ruru, mastered by the God, replied:
 "I know thee by thy cruel beauty bright,
 Kama, who makest many worlds one fire.

Ah, wherefore wilt thou ask of her to increase
 The passion and regret? Thou knowest, great love!
 Thy nymph her mother, if thou truly art he
 And not a dream of my disastrous soul."
 But with the thrilled eternal smile that makes
 The spring, the lover of Rathi golden-limbed
 Replied to Ruru, "Mortal, I am he;
 I am that Madan who inform the stars
 With lustre and on life's wide canvas fill
 Pictures of light and shade, of joy and tears,
 Make ordinary moments wonderful
 And common speech a charm: knit life to life
 With interfusions of opposing souls
 And sudden meetings and slow sorceries:
 Wing the boy bridegroom to that panting breast,
 Smite Gods with mortal faces, dreadfully
 Among great beautiful kings and watched by eyes
 That burn, force on the virgin's fainting limbs
 And drive her to the one face never seen,
 The one breast meant eternally for her.
 By me come wedded sweets, by me the wife's
 Busy delight and passionate obedience,
 And loving eager service never sated,
 And happy lips, and worshipping soft eyes:
 And mine the husband's hungry arms and use
 Unwearying of old tender words and ways,
 Joy of her hair, and silent pleasure felt
 Of nearness to one dear familiar shape.
 Nor only these, but many affections bright
 And soft glad things cluster around my name.
 I plant fraternal tender yearnings, make
 The sister's sweet attractiveness and leap
 Of heart towards imperious kindred blood,
 And the young mother's passionate deep look,
 Earth's high similitude of One not earth,

Teach filial heart-beats strong. These are my gifts
For which men praise me, these my glories calm:
But fiercer shafts I can, wild storms blown down
Shaking fixed minds and melting marble natures,
Tears and dumb bitterness and pain unpitied,
Racked thirsting jealousy and kind hearts made stone:
And in undisciplined huge souls I sow
Dire vengeance and impossible cruelties,
Cold lusts that linger and fierce fickleness,
The loves close kin to hate, brute violence
And mad insatiable longings pale,
And passion blind as death and deaf as swords.
O mortal, all deep-souled desires and all
Yearnings immense are mine, so much I can.”
So as he spoke, his face grew wonderful
With vast suggestion, his human-seeming limbs
Brightened with a soft splendour: luminous hints
Of the concealed divinity transpired.
But soon with a slight discontented frown:
“So much I can, as even the great Gods learn.
Only with death I wrestle in vain, until
My passionate godhead all becomes a doubt.
Mortal, I am the light in stars, of flowers
The bloom, the nameless fragrance that pervades
Creation: but behind me, older than me,
He comes with night and cold tremendous shade.
Hard is the way to him, most hard to find,
Harder to tread, for perishable feet
Almost impossible. Yet, O fair youth,
If thou must needs go down, and thou art strong
In passion and in constancy, nor easy
The soul to slay that has survived such grief—
Steel then thyself to venture, armed by Love.
Yet listen first what heavy trade they drive
Who would win back their dead to human arms.”

So much the God; but swift, with eager eyes
 And panting bosom and glorious flushed face,
 The lover: "O great Love! O beautiful Love!
 But if by strength is possible, of body
 Or mind, battle of spirit or moving speech,
 Sweet speech that makes even cruelty grow kind,
 Or yearning melody—for I have heard
 That when Saruswathi in heaven her harp
 Has smitten, the cruel sweetness terrible
 Coils taking no denial through the soul,
 And tears burst from the hearts of Gods—then I,
 Making great music, or with perfect words,
 Will strive, or staying him with desperate hands
 Match human strength 'gainst formidable Death.
 But if with price, ah God! what easier! Tears
 Dreadful, innumerable I will absolve,
 Or pay with anguish through the centuries,
 Soul's agony and torture physical,
 So her small hands about my face at last
 I feel, close real hair sting me with life,
 And palpable breathing bosom on me press."
 Then with a lenient smile the mighty God:
 "O ignorant fond lover, not with tears
 Shalt thou persuade immitigable Death.
 He will not pity all thy pangs: nor know
 His stony eyes with music to grow kind,
 Nor lovely words accepts. And how wilt thou
 Wrestle with that grim shadow, who canst not save
 One bloom from fading? A sole thing the Gods
 Demand from all men living, sacrifice:
 Nor without this shall any crown be grasped.
 Yet many sacrifices are there, oxen,
 And prayers, and Soma wine, and pious flowers,
 Blood and the fierce expense of mind, and pure
 Incense of perfect actions, perfect thoughts,

Or liberality wide as the sun's,
Or ruthless labour or disastrous tears,
Exile or death or pain more hard than death,
Absence, a desert, from the faces loved;
Even sin may be a sumptuous sacrifice
Acceptable for unholy fruits. But none
Of these the inexorable shadow asks:
Alone of gods Death loves not gifts: he visits
The pure heart as the stained. Lo, the just man
Bowed helpless over his dead, nor all his virtues
Shall quicken that cold bosom: near him the wild
Marred face and passionate and will not leave
Kissing dead lips that shall not chide him more.
Life the pale ghost requires: with half thy life
Thou mayst protract the thread too early cut
Of that delightful spirit—half sweet life.
O Ruru, lo, thy frail precarious days,
And yet how sweet they are! simply to breathe
How warm and sweet! And ordinary things
How exquisite, thou then shalt learn when lost,
How luminous the daylight was, mere sleep
How soft and friendly clasping tired limbs,
And the deliciousness of common food.
And things indifferent thou then shalt want,
Regret rejected beauty, brightnesses
Bestowed in vain. Wilt thou yield up, O lover,
Half thy sweet portion of this light and gladness,
Thy little insufficient share, and vainly
Give to another? She is not thyself:
Thou dost not feel the gladness in her bosom,
Nor with the torture of thy body will she
Throb and cry out: at most with tender looks
And pitiful attempt to feel move near thee,
And weep how far she is from what she loves.
Men live like stars that see each other in heaven,

But one knows not the pleasure and the grief
 The others feel: he lonely rapture has,
 Or bears his incommunicable pain.

O Ruru, there are many beautiful faces,
 But one thyself. Think then how thou shalt mourn
 When thou hast shortened joy and feelst at last
 The shadow that thou hadst for such sweet store."

He ceased with a strange doubtful look. But swift
 Came back the lover's voice, like passionate rain.

"O idle words! For what is mere sunlight?

Who would live on into extreme old age,
 Burden the impatient world, a weary old man,
 And look back on a selfish time ill-spent

Exacting out of prodigal great life

Small separate pleasures like an usurer,

And no rich sacrifice and no large act

Finding onself in others, nor the sweet

Expense of nature in her passionate gusts

Of love and giving, first of the soul's needs?

Who is so coldly wise, and does not feel

How wasted were our grandiose human days

In prudent personal unshared delights?

Why dost thou mock me, friend of all the stars?

How canst thou be love's god and know not this,

That love burns down the body's barriers cold

And laughs at difference—playing with it merely

To make joy sweeter? O too deeply I know,

The lover is not different from the loved,

Nor is their silence dumb to each other. He

Contains her heart and feels her body in his,

He flushes with her heat, chills with her cold.

And when she dies, oh! when she dies, oh me,

The emptiness, the maim! the life no life,

The sweet and passionate oneness lost! And if

By shortening of great grief won back, O price

Easy! O glad briefness, æons may envy!
 For we shall live not fearing death, nor feel
 As others yearning over the loved at night
 When the lamp flickers, sudden chills of dread
 Terrible; nor at short absence agonise,
 Wrestling with mad imagination. Us
 Serenely when the darkening shadow comes,
 One common sob shall end and soul clasp soul,
 Leaving the body in a long dim kiss.
 Then in the joys of heaven we shall consort,
 Amid the gladness often touching hands
 To make bliss sure; or in the ghastly stream
 If we must anguish, yet it shall not part
 Our passionate limbs inextricably locked
 By one strong agony, but we shall feel
 Hell's pain half joy through sweet companionship.
 God Love, I weary of words. O wing me rather
 To her, my eloquent princess of the spring,
 In whatsoever wintry shores she roam."
 He ceased with eager forward eyes; once more
 A light of beauty immortal through the limbs
 Gleaming of the boy-god and soft sweet face,
 Glorifying him, flushed, and he replied:
 "Go then, O thou dear youth, and bear this flower
 In thy hand warily. For thou shalt come
 To that high meeting of the Ganges pure
 With vague and violent Ocean. There arise
 And loudly appeal my brother, the wild sea."
 He spoke and stretched out his immortal hand,
 And Ruru's met it. All his young limbs yearned
 With dreadful rapture shuddering through them. He
 Felt in his fingers subtle uncertain bloom,
 A quivering magnificence, half fire,
 Whose petals changed like flame, and from them breathed

Dangerous attraction and alarmed delight,
 As at a peril near. He raised his eyes,
 But the green place was empty of the God.
 Only the faery tree looked up at heaven
 Through branches, and with recent pleasure shook.
 Then over fading earth the night was lord.

But from Shatudru and Bipasha, streams
 Once holy, and loved Iravathi and swift
 Clear Chandrabhaga and Bitosta's toil
 For man, went Ruru to bright sumptuous lands
 By Aryan fathers not yet paced, but wild,
 But virgin to our fruitful human toil,
 Where nature lay reclined in dumb delight
 Alone with woodlands and the voiceless hills.
 He with the widening yellow Ganges came,
 Amazed, to trackless countries where few tribes,
 Kirath and Poundrian, warred, worshipping trees
 And the great serpent. But robust wild earth,
 But forests with their splendid life of beasts
 Savage mastered those strong inhabitants.
 Thither came Ruru. In a thin soft eve
 Ganges spread far her multitudinous waves,
 A glimmering restlessness with voices large,
 And from the forests of that half-seen bank
 A boat came heaving over it, white-winged,
 With a sole silent helmsman marble-pale.
 Then Ruru by his side stepped in; they went
 Down the mysterious river and beheld
 The great banks widen out of sight. The world
 Was water and the skies to water plunged.
 All night with a dim motion gliding down
 He felt the dark against his eyelids; felt,
 As in a dream more real than daylight,

The helmsman with his dumb and marble face
Near him and moving wideness all around,
And that continual gliding dimly on,
As one who on a shoreless water sails
For ever to a port he shall not win.
But when the darkness paled, he heard a moan
Of mightier waves and had the wide great sense
Of ocean and the depths below our feet.
But the boat stopped; the pilot lifted on him
His marble gaze coeval with the stars.
Then in the white-winged boat the boy arose
And saw around him the vast sea all grey
And heaving in the pallid dawning light.
Loud Ruru cried across the murmur: "Hear me,
O inarticulate grey Ocean, hear.
If any cadence in thy infinite
Rumour was caught from lover's moan, O Sea,
Open thy abysses to my mortal tread.
For I would travel to the despairing shades,
The spheres of suffering where entangled dwell
Souls unreleased and the untimely dead
Who weep remembering. Thither, O guide me,
No despicable wayfarer, but Ruru,
But son of a great Rishi, from all men
On earth selected for peculiar pangs,
Special disaster. Lo, this petalled fire,
How freshly it blooms and lasts with my great pain!"
He held the flower out subtly glimmering.
And like a living thing the huge sea trembled,
Then rose, calling, and filled the sight with waves,
Converging all its giant crests; towards him
Innumerable waters loomed and heaven
Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved
Dreadfully swift; then with a prone wide sound
All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,

Curving with monstrous menace over him.
 He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed
 Descending, saw with floating hair arise
 The daughters of the sea in pale green light,
 A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,
 And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld
 A mute stupendous march of waters race
 To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.
 Ganges he saw, as men predestined rush
 Upon a fearful doom foreseen, so run,
 Alarmed, with anguished speed, the river vast.
 Veiled to his eyes the triple goddess rose.
 She with a sound of waters cried to him,
 A thousand voices moaning with one pain:
 "Lover, who fearedst not sunlight to leave,
 With me thou mayst behold that helpless spirit
 Lost in the gloom, if still thy burning bosom
 Have courage to endure great Nature's night
 In the dire lands where I, a goddess, mourn
 Hurting my heart with my own cruelty."
 She darkened to the ominous descent,
 Unwilling, and her once so human waves
 Sent forth a cry not meant for living ears.
 And Ruru chilled; but terrible strong love
 Was like a fiery finger in his breast
 Pointing him on; so he through horror went
 Conducted by inexorable sound.
 For monstrous voices to his ear were close,
 And bodiless terrors with their dimness seized him
 In an obscurity phantasmal. Thus
 With agony of soul to the grey waste
 He came, glad of the pain of passage over,
 As men who through the storms of anguish strive
 Into abiding tranquil dreariness
 And draw sad breath assured; to the grey waste,

Hopeless Patala, the immutable
 Country, where neither sun nor rain arrives,
 Nor happy labour of the human plough
 Fruitfully turns the soil, but in vague sands
 And indeterminable strange rocks and caverns
 That into silent blackness huge recede,
 Dwell the great serpent and his hosts, writhed forms,
 Sinuous, abhorred, through many horrible leagues
 Coiling in a half darkness. Shapes he saw,
 And heard the hiss and knew the lambent light
 Loathsome, but passed compelling his strong soul.
 At last through those six tired hopeless worlds,
 Too hopeless far for grief, pale he arrived
 Into a nether air by anguish moved,
 And heard before him cries that pierced the heart,
 Human, not to be borne, and issued shaken
 By the great river accursed. Maddened it ran
 Anguished, importunate, and in its waves
 The drifting ghosts their agony endured.
 There Ruru saw pale faces float of kings
 And grandiose victors and revered high priests
 And famous women. Now rose from the wave
 A golden shuddering arm and now a face.
 Torn piteous sides were seen and breasts that quailed.
 Over them moaned the penal waters on,
 And had no joy of their fierce cruelty.
 Then Ruru, his young cheeks with pity wan,
 Half moaned: "O miserable race of men,
 With violent and passionate souls you come
 Foredoomed upon the earth and live brief days
 In fear and anguish, catching at stray beams
 Of sunlight, little fragrances of flowers;
 Then from your spacious earth in a great horror
 Descend into this night, and here too soon
 Must expiate your few inadequate joys.

O bargain hard! Death helps us not. He leads
 Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,
 The naked spirit here. On my sweet flower,
 Art thou too whelmed in this fierce wailing flood?
 Ah me! But I will haste and deeply plunge
 Into its hopeless pools and either bring
 Thy old warm beauty back beneath the stars,
 Or find thee out and clasp thy tortured bosom
 And kiss thy sweet wrung lips and hush thy cries.
 Love shall draw half thy pain into my limbs;
 Then we shall triumph glad of agony."
 He ceased and one replied close by his ear:
 "O thou who troublest with thy living eyes
 Established death, pass on. She whom thou seekest
 Rolls not in the accursèd tide. For late
 I saw her mid those pale inhabitants
 Whom bodily anguish visits not, but thoughts
 Sorrowful and dumb memories absolve,
 And martyrdom of scourged hearts quivering."
 He turned and saw astride the dolorous flood
 A mighty bridge paved with mosaic fire,
 All restless, and a woman clothed in flame,
 With hands calamitous that held a sword,
 Stood of the quaking passage sentinel.
 Magnificent and dire her burning face.
 "Pass on," she said once more, "O Bhrgu's son;
 The flower protects thee from my hands." She stretched
 One arm towards him and with violence
 Majestic over the horrid arch compelled.
 Unhurt, though shaking from her touch, alone
 He stood upon an inner bank with strange
 Black dreary mosses covered and perceived
 A dim and level plain without one flower.
 Over it paced a multitude immense
 With gentle faces occupied by pain;

Strong men were there and grieving mothers, girls
 With early beauty in their limbs and young
 Sad children of their childlike faces robbed.
 Naked they paced with falling hair and gaze
 Drooping upon their bosoms, weak as flowers
 That die for want of rain un murmuring.
 Always a silence was upon the place.
 But Ruru came among them. Suddenly
 One felt him there and looked, then as a wind
 Moves over a still field of patient corn,
 And the ears stir and shudder and look up
 And bend innumera bly flowing, so
 All those dumb spirits stirred and through them passed
 One shuddering motion of raised faces; then
 They streamed towards him without sound and caught
 With desperate hands his robe or touched his hair
 Or strove to feel upon them living breath.
 Pale girls and quiet children came and knelt
 And with large sorrowful eyes into his looked.
 Yet with their silent passion the cold hush
 Moved not; but Ruru's human heart half burst
 With burden of so many sorrows; tears
 Welled from him; he with anguish understood
 That terrible and wordless sympathy
 Of dead souls for the living. Then he turned
 His eyes and scanned their lovely faces strange
 For that one face and found it not. He paled,
 And spoke vain words into the listless air:
 "O spirits once joyous, miserable race,
 Happier if the old gladness were forgot!
 My soul yearns with your sorrow. Yet ah! reveal
 If dwell my love in your sad nation lost.
 Well may you know her, O wan beautiful spirits!
 But she most beautiful of all that died,
 By sweetness recognisable. Her name

The sunshine knew." Speaking his tears made way:
 But they with dumb lips only looked at him,
 A vague and empty mourning in their eyes.
 He murmured low: " Ah, folly! were she here,
 Would she not first have felt me, first have raised
 Her lids and run to me, leaned back her face
 Of silent sorrow on my breast and looked
 With the old altered eyes into my own
 And striven to make my anguish understand?
 Oh joy, had she been here! for though her lips
 Of their old excellent music quite were robbed,
 Yet her dumb passion would have spoken to me;
 We should have understood each other and walked
 Silently hand in hand, almost content."
 He said and passed through those untimely dead.
 Speechless they followed him with clinging eyes.
 Then to a solemn building weird he came
 With grave colossal pillars round. One dome
 Roofed the whole brooding edifice, like cloud,
 And at the door strange shapes were pacing, armed.
 Then from their fear the sweet and mournful dead
 Drew back, returning to their wordless grief.
 But Ruru to the perilous doorway strode,
 And those disastrous shapes upon him raised
 Their bows and aimed; but he held out Love's flower,
 And with stern faces checked they let him pass.
 He entered and beheld a silent hall
 Dim and unbounded; moving then like one
 Who up a dismal stair seeks ever light,
 Attained a dais brilliant doubtfully
 With flaming pediment and round it coiled
 Python and Naga monstrous, Joruthearu,
 Tuxuc and Vasuki himself, immense,
 Magic Carcotaca all flecked with fire;
 And many other prone destroying shapes

Coiled. On the wondrous dais rose a throne,
 And he its pedestal whose lotus hood
 With ominous beauty crowns his horrible
 Sleek folds, great Mahapudma; high displayed
 He bears the throne of Death. There sat supreme
 With those compassionate and lethal eyes,
 Who many names, who many natures holds;
 Yama, the strong pure Hades sad and subtle,
 Dharma, who keeps the laws of old untouched,
 Critanta, who ends all things and at last
 Himself shall end. On either side of him
 The four-eyed dogs mysterious rested prone,
 Watchful, with huge heads on their paws advanced;
 And emanations of the godhead dim
 Moved near him, shadowy or serpentine,
 Vast Time and cold irreparable Death.
 Then Ruru came and bowed before the throne;
 And swaying all those figures stirred as shapes
 Upon a tapestry moved by the wind,
 And the sad voice was heard: "What breathing man
 Bows at the throne of Hades? By what force,
 Spiritual or communicated, troubles
 His living beauty the dead grace of Hell?"
 And one replied who seemed a neighbouring voice:
 "He has the blood of Gods and Titans old.
 An Apsara his mother liquid-orbed
 Bore to the youthful Chyavan's strong embrace
 This passionate face of earth with Eden touched.
 Chyavan was Bhrigu's child, Puloma bore,
 The Titaness,—Bhrigu, great Brahma's son.
 Love gave the flower that helps by anguish; therefore
 He chilled not with the breath of Hades, nor
 The cry of the infernal stream made stone."
 But at the name of Love all hell was moved.
 Death's throne half faded into twilight; hissed

The phantoms serpentine as if in pain,
 And the dogs raised their dreadful heads. Then spoke
 Yama: "And what needs Love in this pale realm,
 The warm great Love? All worlds his breath confounds,
 Mars solemn order and old steadfastness.
 But not in hell his legates come and go;
 His vernal jurisdiction to bare Hell
 Extends not. This last world resists his power
 Youthful, anarchic. Here will he enlarge
 Tumult and wanton joys?" The voice replied:
 "Menaca momentary on the earth,
 Heaven's Apsara by the fleeting hours beguiled
 Played in the happy hidden glens; there bowed
 To yoke of swift terrestrial joys she bore,
 Immortal, to that fair Gundhurva king
 A mortal blossom of delight. That bloom
 Young Ruru found and plucked, but her too soon
 Thy fatal hooded snake on earth surprised,
 And he through gloom now travels armed by Love."
 But then all Hades swaying towards him cried:
 "O mortal, O misled! But sacrifice
 Is stronger, nor may law of Hell or Heaven
 Its fierce effectual action supersede.
 Thy dead I yield. Yet thou bethink thee, mortal,
 Not as a tedious evil nor to be
 Lightly rejected gave the gods old age,
 But tranquil, but august, but making easy
 The steep ascent to God. Therefore must Time
 Still batter down the glory and form of youth
 And animal magnificent strong ease,
 To warn the earthward man that he is spirit
 Dallying with transience, nor by death he ends,
 Nor to the dumb warm mother's arms is bound,
 But called unborn into the unborn skies.
 For body fades with the increasing soul

And wideness of its limit grown intolerant
 Replaces life's impetuous joys by peace.
 Youth, manhood, ripeness, age, four seasons
 Twixt its return and pale departing life
 Describes, O mortal,—youth that forward bends
 Midst hopes, delights and dreamings; manhood deepens
 To passions, toils and thoughts profound; but ripeness
 For large reflective gathering-up of these,
 As on a lonely slope whence men look back
 Down towards the cities and the human fields
 Where they too worked and laughed and loved; next age,
 Wonderful age with those approaching skies.
 That boon wilt thou renounce? Wherefore? To bring
 For a few years—how miserably few!—
 Her sunward who must after all return.
 Ah, son of Rishis, cease. Lo, I remit
 Hell's grasp, not oft-relinquished, and send back
 Thy beautiful life unborrowed to the stars.
 Or thou must render to the immutable
 Total all thy fruit-bearing years; then she
 Reblossoms." But the Shadow antagonist:
 "Let him be shown the glory he would renounce."
 And over the flaming pediment there moved,
 As on a frieze a march of sculptures, carved
 By Phidias for the Virgin strong and pure,
 Most perfect once of all things seen in earth
 Or Heaven, in Athens on the Acropolis,
 But now dismembered, now disrupt! or as
 In Buddhist cavern or Orissan temple,
 Large aspirations architectural,
 Warrior and dancing-girl, adept and king,
 And conquering pomps and daily peaceful groups
 Dream delicately on, softening with beauty
 Great Bhuvanayshwar, the Almighty's house,

With sculptural suggestion so were limned
 Scenes future on a pediment of fire.
 There Ruru saw himself divine with age,
 A Rishi to whom infinity is close,
 Rejoicing in green wood or musical shade
 Or boundless mountain-top where most we feel
 Wideness, not by small happy things disturbed.
 Around him, as around an ancient tree
 Its seedlings, forms august or burning rose;
 They grew beneath his hands and were his work;
 Great kings whom time remembers and fertile
 Deep minds and poets with their chanting lips
 Whose words were seed of vast philosophies—
 These worshipped; but above, half day, he saw
 Amazed the dawn of that mysterious Face
 And all the universe in beauty merge.
 Mad the boy thrilled upwards, then spent ebbd back.
 Over his mind, as birds across the sky
 Sweep and are gone, the vision of those fields
 And drooping faces came; almost he heard
 The burdened river with human anguish wail.
 And with a sudden fury gathering
 His soul he hurled out of it half its life,
 And fell, like lightning, prone. Triumphant rose
 The Shadow chill and deepened giant night.
 Only the dais flickered in the gloom,
 And those snake-eyes of cruel fire subdued.
 But suddenly a bloom, a fragrance. Hell
 Shuddered with bliss. Resentful, overborne,
 The world-besetting Terror faded back
 Like one grown weak by desperate victory,
 And a voice cried in Ruru's tired soul:
 "Arise! the strife is over, easy now
 The horror that thou hast to face, the burden
 Now shared." And with a sudden burst like spring

Life woke in the strong lover over-tried.
 He rose and left dim Death. Twelve times he crossed
 Boithorini, the river dolorous,
 Twelve times resisted Hell and hurried down
 Into the ominous pit where plunges black
 The vast stream thundering, saw, led puissantly
 From night to unimaginable night,—
 As men oppressed in dreams, who cannot wake,
 But measure penal visions,—punishments
 Whose sight pollutes, unheard-of tortures, pangs
 Monstrous, intolerable mute agonies,
 Twisted unmoving attitudes of pain,
 Like thoughts inhuman in statuary. A fierce
 And iron voicelessness had grasped those worlds.
 No horror of cries expressed their endless pain,
 No saving struggle, no breathings of the soul.
 And in the last hell irremediable
 Where Ganges clots into that fatal pool,
 Appalled he saw her; pallid, listless, bare—
 O other than that earthly warmth and grace
 In which the happy roses deepened and dimmed
 With come-and-go of swift enamoured blood!
 Dumb drooped she; round her shapes of anger armed
 Stood dark like thunderclouds. But Ruru sprang
 Upon them, burning with the admitted God.
 They from his touch like ineffectual fears
 Vanished; then sole with her, trembling he cried
 The old glad name and crying bent to her
 And touched, and at the touch the silent knots
 Of Hell were broken and its sombre dream
 Of dreadful-stately pains at once dispersed.
 Then as from one whom a surpassing joy
 Has conquered, all the bright surrounding world
 Streams swiftly into distance, and he feels
 His daily senses slipping from his grasp,

So that unbearable enormous world
 Went rolling mighty shades, like the wet mist
 From men on mountain-tops; and sleep outstretched
 Rising its soft arms towards him and his thoughts,
 As on a bed, sank to ascending void.

But when he woke, he heard the koil insist
 On sweetness and the voice of happy things
 Content with sunlight. All around him, warm;
 Was sense of old essential earth and custom
 Familiar tranquillising body and mind,
 As in its natural wave a lotus feels.
 He looked and saw all grass and dense green trees,
 And sunshine and a single grasshopper
 Near him repeated fierily its note.
 Thrilling he felt beneath his bosom her;
 Oh, warm and breathing were those rescued limbs
 Against the greenness, vivid, palpable, white,
 With great black hair and real and her cheek's
 Old softness and her mouth a dewy rose.
 For many moments comforting his soul
 With all her jasmine body sun-ensnared
 He fed his longing eyes and, half in doubt,
 With touches satisfied himself of her.
 Hesitating he kissed her eyelids. Sighing
 With a slight sob she woke and earthly large
 Her eyes looked upward into his. She stretched
 Her arms up, yearning, and their souls embraced;
 Then twixt brief sobbing laughter and blissful tears,
 Clinging with all her limbs to him, "O love,
 The green green world! the warm sunlight!" and ceased,
 Finding no words; but the earth breathed round them,
 Glad of her children and the koil's voice
 Persisted in the morning of the world.

POEMS



CONTENTS

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>Invitation</i> | <i>page</i> | <i>121</i> |
| <i>Who</i> | | <i>122</i> |
| <i>Miracles</i> | | <i>124</i> |
| <i>Reminiscence</i> | | <i>124</i> |
| <i>A Vision of Science</i> | | <i>125</i> |
| <i>Immortal Love</i> | | <i>128</i> |
| <i>A Tree</i> | | <i>128</i> |
| <i>To the Sea</i> | | <i>129</i> |
| <i>Revelation</i> | | <i>131</i> |
| <i>Karma (Radha's Complaint)</i> | | <i>132</i> |
| <i>Appeal</i> | | <i>133</i> |
| <i>A Child's Imagination</i> | | <i>134</i> |
| <i>The Sea at Night</i> | | <i>135</i> |
| <i>The Vedantin's Prayer</i> | | <i>136</i> |
| <i>Rebirth</i> | | <i>138</i> |
| <i>The Triumph-Song of Trishuncou</i> | | <i>140</i> |
| <i>Life and Death</i> | | <i>141</i> |
| <i>Evening</i> | | <i>141</i> |
| <i>Parabrahman</i> | | <i>142</i> |
| <i>God</i> | | <i>143</i> |
| <i>The Fear of Death</i> | | <i>144</i> |
| <i>Seasons</i> | | <i>144</i> |
| <i>The Rishi</i> | | <i>145</i> |
| <i>In the Moonlight</i> | | <i>163</i> |

Invitation

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?
Not in the petty circle of cities
Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;
Over me God is blue in the welkin,
Against me the wind and the storm rebel.
I sport with solitude here in my regions,
Of misadventure have made me a friend.
Who would live largely? Who would live freely?
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.
I am the lord of tempest and mountain,
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

Who

In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest,
Whose is the hand that has painted the glow?
When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,
Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?

He is lost in the heart, in the cavern of Nature,
He is found in the brain where He builds up the thought:
In the pattern and bloom of the flowers He is woven,
In the luminous net of the stars He is caught.

In the strength of a man, in the beauty of woman,
In the laugh of a boy, in the blush of a girl;
The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven,
Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl.

These are His works and His veils and His shadows;
But where is He then? by what name is He known?
Is He Brahma or Vishnu? a man or a woman?
Bodied, or bodiless? twin or alone?

We have love for a boy who is dark and resplendent,
A woman is lord of us, naked and fierce.
We have seen Him a-muse on the snow of the mountains,
We have watched Him at work in the heart of the spheres.

We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning:
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,
Then lures with His joy and His beauty again.

All music is only the sound of His laughter,
All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.

He is strength that is loud in the blare of the trumpets,
And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;
He slays without stint and is full of compassion;
He wars for the world and its ultimate years.

In the sweep of the worlds, in the surge of the ages,
Ineffable, mighty, majestic and pure,
Beyond the last pinnacle seized by the thinker
He is throned in His seats that for ever endure.

The Master of man and his infinite Lover,
He is close to our hearts, had we vision to see;
We are blind with our pride and the pomp of our passions,
We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone.

Miracles

Snow in June may break from Nature,
Ice through August last,
The random rose may increase stature
In December's blast;

But this at least can never be,
O thou mortal ecstasy,
That one should live, even in pain,
Visited by thy disdain.

Reminiscence

My soul arose at dawn and, listening, heard
One voice abroad, a solitary bird,
A song not master of its note, a cry
That persevered into eternity.
My soul leaned out into the dawn to hear
In the world's solitude its winged compeer
And, hearkening what the Angel had to say,
Saw lustre in midnight and a secret day
Was opened to it. It beheld the stars
Born from a thought and knew how being prepares.
Then I remembered how I woke from sleep
And made the skies, built earth, formed Ocean deep.

A Vision of Science

I dreamed that in myself the world I saw,
 Wherein three Angels strove for mastery. Law
 Was one, clear vision and denial cold,
 Yet in her limits strong, presumptuous, bold;
 The second with enthusiasm bright,
 Flame in her heart but round her brows the night,
 Faded as this advanced. She could not bear
 That searching gaze, nor the strong chilling air
 These thoughts created, nourishing our parts
 Of mind, but petrifying human hearts.
 Science was one, the other gave her name,
 Religion. But a third behind them came,
 Veiled, vague, remote, and had as yet no right
 Upon the world, but lived in her own light.
 Wide were the victories of the Angel proud
 Who conquered now and in her praise were loud
 The nations. Few even yet to the other clove,—
 And some were souls of night and some were souls of love.
 But this was confident and throned. Her heralds ranged
 Claiming that night was dead and all things changed;
 For all things opened, all seemed clear, seemed bright—
 Save the vast ranges that they left in night.
 However, the light they shed upon the earth
 Was great indeed, a firm and mighty birth.
 A century's progress lived before my eyes.
 Delivered from amazement and surprise,
 Man's spirit measuring his worlds around
 The laws of sight divined and laws of sound.
 Light was not hidden from its searching gaze,
 Nor matter could deny her myriad maze

To the cold enquiry; for the far came near,
 The small loomed large, the intricate grew clear.
 Measuring and probing the strong Angel strode,
 Dissolving and combining, till she trod
 Firmly among the stars, could weigh their forms,
 Foretold the earthquakes, analysed the storms.
 Doubt seemed to end and wonder's reign was closed.
 The stony pages of the earth disclosed
 Their unremembered secrets. Horses of steam
 Were bitted and the lightnings made a team
 To draw our chariots. Heaven was scaled at last
 And the loud seas subdued. Distance resigned
 Its strong obstructions to the mastering mind.
 So moved that spirit trampling; then it laid
 Its hand at last upon itself, how this was made
 Wondering, and sought to class and sought to trace
 Mind by its forms, the wearer by the dress.
 Then the other arose and met that spirit robust,
 Who laboured; she now grew a shade who must
 Fade wholly away, yet to her fellow cried,
 "I pass, for thou hast laboured well and wide.
 Thou thinkest term and end for thee are not;
 But though thy pride is great, thou hast forgot
 The Sphinx that waits for man beside the way.
 All questions thou mayst answer, but one day
 Her question shall await thee. That reply,
 As all we must; for they, who cannot, die.
 She slays them and their mangled bodies lie
 Upon the highways of eternity.
 Therefore, if thou wouldst live, know first this thing,
 Who thou art in this dungeon labouring."
 And Science confidently, "Nothing am I but earth,
 Tissue and nerve and from the seed a birth,
 A mould, a plasm, a gas, a little that is much.
 In these grey cells that quiver to each touch

The secret lies of man; they are the thing called I.
Matter insists and matter makes reply.
Shakespeare was this; this force in Jesus yearned
And conquered by the cross; this only learned
The secret of the suns that blaze afar;
This was Napoleon's giant mind of war."
I heard and marvelled in myself to see
The infinite deny infinity.
Yet the weird paradox seemed justified;
Even mysticism shrank out-mystified.
But the third Angel came and touched my eyes;
I saw the mornings of the future rise,
I heard the voices of an age unborn
That comes behind us and our pallid morn,
And from the heart of an approaching light
One said to man, "Know thyself infinite,
Who shalt do mightier miracles than these,
Infinite, moving mid infinities."
Then from our hills the ancient answer pealed,
"For Thou, O Splendour, art myself concealed,
And the grey cell contains me not, the star
I outmeasure and am older than the elements are.
Whether on earth or far beyond the sun,
I, stumbling, clouded, am the Eternal One."

Immortal Love

If I had wooed thee for thy colour rare,
Cherished the rose in thee
Or wealth of Nature's brilliants in thy hair,
O woman fair,
My love might cease to be.

Or, had I sought thee for thy virtuous youth
And tender yearning speech,
Thy swift compassion and deliberate truth,
O heart of ruth,
Time might pursue, might reach.

But I have loved thee for thyself indeed
And with myself have snared;
Immortal to immortal I made speed.
Change I exceed
And am for Time prepared.

A Tree

A tree beside the sandy river-beach
Holds up its topmost boughs
Like fingers towards the skies they cannot reach,
Earth-bound, heaven-amorous.

This is the soul of man. Body and brain
Hungry for earth our heavenly flight detain.

To the Sea

O grey wild sea,
 Thou hast a message, thunderer, for me.
 Their huge wide backs
 Thy monstrous billows raise, abysmal cracks
 Dug deep between.
 One pale boat flutters over them, hardly seen.
 I hear thy roar
 Call me, "Why dost thou linger on the shore
 With fearful eyes
 Watching my tops visit their foam-washed skies?
 This trivial boat
 Dares my vast battering billows and can float.
 Death if it find,
 Are there not many thousands left behind?
 Dare my wide roar,
 Nor cling like cowards to the easy shore.
 Come down and know
 What rapture lives in danger and o'erthrow."
 Yes, thou great sea,
 I am more mighty and outbillow thee.
 On thy tops I rise;
 'Tis an excuse to dally with the skies.
 I sink below
 The bottom of the clamorous world to know.
 On the safe land
 To linger is to lose what God has planned

For man's wide soul,
Who set eternal godhead for its goal.

Therefore he arrayed
Danger and difficulty like seas and made

Pain and defeat,
And put His giant snares around our feet.

The cloud He informs
With thunder and assails us with His storms,

That man may grow
King over pain and victor of o'erthrow

Matching his great
Unconquerable soul with adverse Fate.

Take me, be
My way to climb the heavens, thou rude great sea.

I will seize thy mane,
O lion, I will tame thee and disdain;

Or else below
Into thy salt abysmal caverns go,

Receive thy weight
Upon me and be stubborn as my Fate.

I come, O Sea,
To measure my enormous self with thee.

Revelation

Someone leaping from the rocks
Past me ran with wind-blown locks
Like a startled bright surmise
Visible to mortal eyes,—
Just a cheek of frightened rose
That with sudden beauty glows,
Just a footstep like the wind
And a hurried glance behind,
And then nothing,—as a thought
Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
Someone of the heavenly rout
From behind the veil ran out.

Karma

(Radha's Complaint)

Love, but my words are vain as air!
In my sweet joyous youth, a heart untried,
Thou took'st me in Love's sudden snare,
Thou wouldst not let me in my home abide.

And now I have nought else to try,
But I will make my soul one strong desire
And into Ocean leaping die:
So shall my heart be cooled of all its fire.

Die and be born to life again
As Nanda's son, the joy of Braja's girls,
And I will make thee Radha then,
A laughing child's face set with lovely curls.

Then I will love thee and then leave;
Under the codome's boughs when thou goest by
Bound to the water morn or eve,
Lean on that tree fluting melodiously.

Thou shalt hear me and fall at sight
Under my charm; my voice shall wholly move
Thy simple girl's heart to delight;
Then shalt thou know the bitterness of love.

[From an old Bengali poem]

Appeal

Thy youth is but a noon, of night take heed,—
 A noon that is a fragment of a day,
 And the swift eve all sweet things bears away,
 All sweet things and all bitter, rose and weed.
 For others' bliss who lives, he lives indeed.

But thou art pitiful and ruth shouldst know.
 I bid thee trifle not with fatal love,
 But save our pride and dear one, O my dove,
 And heaven and earth and the nether world below
 Shall only with thy praises peopled grow.

Life is a bliss that cannot long abide,
 But while thou livest, love. For love the sky
 Was founded, earth upheaved from the deep cry
 Of waters, and by love is sweetly tied
 The golden cordage of our youth and pride.

[Suggested by an old Bengali poem]

A Child's Imagination

O thou golden image,
 Miniature of bliss,
Speaking sweetly, speaking meetly!
 Every word deserves a kiss.

Strange, remote and splendid
 Childhood's fancy pure
Thrills to thoughts we cannot fathom,
 Quick felicities obscure.

When the eyes grow solemn
 Laughter fades away,
Nature of her mighty childhood
 Recollects the Titan play;

Woodlands touched by sunlight
 Where the elves abode,
Giant meetings, Titan greetings,
 Fancies of a youthful God.

These are coming on thee
 In thy secret thought;
God remembers in thy bosom
 All the wonders that He wrought.

The Sea at Night

The grey sea creeps half-visible, half-hushed,
And grasps with its innumerable hands
These silent walls. I see beyond a rough
Glimmering infinity, I feel the wash
And hear the sibilation of the waves
That whisper to each other as they push
To shoreward side by side,—long lines and dim
Of movement flecked with quivering spots of foam,
The quiet welter of a shifting world.

The Vedantin's Prayer

Spirit Supreme

Who musest in the silence of the heart,
Eternal gleam,

Thou only Art!

Ah, wherefore with this darkness am I veiled,
My sunlit part

By clouds assailed?

Why am I thus disfigured by desire,
Distracted, haled,

Scorched by the fire

Of fitful passions, from thy peace out-thrust
Into the gyre

Of every gust?

Betrayed to grief, o'ertaken with dismay,
Surprised by lust?

Let not my grey

Blood-clotted past repel thy sovereign ruth,
Nor even delay,

O lonely Truth!

Nor let the specious gods who ape Thee still
Deceive my youth.

These clamours still;

For I would hear the eternal voice and know
The eternal Will.

This brilliant show
 Cumbering the threshold of eternity
Dispel,—bestow

The undimmed eye,
 The heart grown young and clear. Rebuke, O Lord,
These hopes that cry

So deafeningly,
 Remove my sullied centuries, restore
My purity.

O hidden door
 Of Knowledge, open! Strength, fulfil thyself!
Love, outpour!

Rebirth

Not soon is God's delight in us completed,
Nor with one life we end;
Termlessly in us are our spirits seated
And termless joy intend.

Our souls and heaven are of an equal stature
And have a dateless birth;
The unending seed, the infinite mould of Nature,
They were not made on earth,

Nor to the earth do they bequeath their ashes,
But in themselves they last.
An endless future brims beneath thy lashes,
Child of an endless past.

Old memories come to us, old dreams invade us,
Lost people we have known,
Fictions and pictures; but their frames evade us,—
They stand out bare, alone.

Yet all we dream and hope are memories treasured,
Are forecasts we misspell,
But of what life or scene he who has measured
The boundless heavens can tell.

Time is a strong convention; future and present
Were living in the past;
They are one image that our wills complaisant
Into three schemes have cast.

Our past that we forget, is with us deathless,
 Our births and later end
 Already accomplished. To a summit breathless
 Sometimes our souls ascend,

Whence the mind comes back helped; for there emerges
 The ocean vast of Time
 Spread out before us with its infinite surges,
 Its symphonies sublime;

And even from this veil of mind the spirit
 Looks out sometimes and sees
 The bygone æons that our lives inherit,
 The unborn centuries:

It sees wave-trampled realms expel the Ocean,—
 From the vague depths uphurled
 Where now Himaloy stands, the flood's huge motion
 Sees measuring half the world;

Or else the web behind us is unravelled
 And on its threads we gaze,—
 Past motions of the stars, scenes long since travelled
 In Time's far-backward days.

The Triumph-Song of Trishuncou

I shall not die.

Although this body, when the spirit tires
Of its cramped residence, shall feed the fires,
My house consumes, not I.

Leaving that case

I find out ample and ethereal room.
My spirit shall avoid the hungry tomb,
Deceiving death's embrace.

Night shall contain

The sun in its cold depths; Time too must cease;
The stars that labour shall have their release.
I cease not, I remain.

Ere the first seeds

Were sown on earth, I was already old,
And when now unborn planets shall grow cold
My history proceeds.

I am the light

In stars, the strength of lions and the joy
Of mornings; I am man and maid and boy,
Protean, infinite.

I am a tree

That stands out singly from the infinite blue;
I am the quiet falling of the dew
And am the unmeasured sea.

I hold the sky

Together and upbear the teeming earth.
I was the eternal thinker at my birth
And shall be, though I die.

Life and Death

Life, death,—death, life; the words have led for ages
 Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed
 Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages
 Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.
 Life only is, or death is life disguised,—
 Life a short death until by life we are surprised.

Evening

A golden evening, when the thoughtful sun
 Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees
 That bend down to their green companion
 And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering,—these
 And a wide silent sea. Such hour is nearest God,—
 Like rich old age when the long ways have all been trod.

Parabrahman

These wanderings of the suns, these stars at play
In the due measure that they chose of old,
Nor only these, but all the immense array
Of objects that long Time, far Space can hold,
Are divine moments. They are thoughts that form,
They are vision in the Self of things august
And therefore grandly real. Rule and norm
Are processes that they themselves adjust.
The Self of things is not their outward view,
A Force within decides. That Force is He;
His movement is the shape of things we knew,
Movement of Thought is Space and Time. A free
And sovereign master of His world within,
He is not bound by what He does or makes,
He is not bound by virtue or by sin,
Awake who sleeps and when He sleeps awakes.
He is not bound by waking or by sleep;
He is not bound by anything at all.
Laws are that He may conquer them. To creep
Or soar is at His will, to rise or fall.
One from of old possessed Himself above
Who was not anyone nor had a form,
Nor yet was formless. Neither hate nor love
Could limit His perfection, peace nor storm.
He is, we cannot say; for Nothing too
Is His conception of Himself unguessed.
He dawns upon us and we would pursue,
But who has found Him or what arms possessed?

He is not anything, yet all is He;
 He is not all but far exceeds that scope.
 Both Time and Timelessness sink in that sea:
 Time is a wave and Space a wandering drop.
 Within Himself He shadowed Being forth,
 Which is a younger birth, a veil He chose
 To half-conceal Him, Knowledge, nothing worth
 Save to have glimpses of its mighty cause,
 And high Delight, a spirit infinite,
 That is the fountain of this glorious world,
 Delight that labours in its opposite,
 Faints in the rose and on the rack is curled.
 This was the triune playground that He made
 And One there sports awhile. He plucks His flowers
 And by His bees is stung; He is dismayed,
 Flees from Himself or has His sullen hours.
 The Almighty One knew labour, failure, strife;
 Knowledge forgot divined itself again:
 He made an eager death and called it life,
 He stung Himself with bliss and called it pain.

God

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,
 Yet sitst above,
 Master of all who work and rule and know,
 Servant of Love!

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be
 Nor even the clod,
 Therefore we know by that humility
 That thou art God.

The Fear of Death

Death wanders through our lives at will, sweet Death
Is busy with each intake of our breath.
Why do you fear her? Lo, her laughing face
All rosy with the light of jocund grace!
A kind and lovely maiden culling flowers
In a sweet garden fresh with vernal showers,
This is the thing you fear, young portress bright
Who opens to our souls the worlds of light.
Is it because the twisted stem must feel
Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?
Is it because the flowerless stalk droops dull
And ghastly now that was so beautiful?
Or is it the opening portal's horrid jar
That shakes you, feeble souls of courage bare?
Death is but changing of our robes to wait
In wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.

Seasons

Day and night begin, you tell me,
When the sun may choose to set or rise.
Well, it may be; but for me their changing
Is determined only by her eyes.

Summer, spring, the fruitless winter
Hinge, you say, upon the heavenly sun?
Oh, but I have known a yearlong winter!
Spring was by her careless smiles begun.

The Rishi

King Manu in the former ages of the world, when the Arctic continent still subsisted, seeks knowledge from the Rishi of the Pole, who after long baffling him with conflicting side-lights of the knowledge, reveals to him what it chiefly concerns man to know.

MANU

Rishi who trance-held on the mountains old
 Art slumbering, void
 Of sense or motion, for in the spirit's hold
 Of unalloyed
 Immortal bliss thou dreamst protected! Deep
 Let my voice glide
 Into thy dumb retreat and break that sleep
 Abysmal. Hear!
 The frozen snows that heap thy giant bed
 Ice-cold and clear,
 The chill and desert heavens above thee spread
 Vast, austere,
 Are not so sharp but that thy warm limbs brook
 Their bitter breath,
 Are not so wide as thy immense outlook
 On life and death:
 Their vacancy thy silent mind and bright
 Outmeasureth.
 But ours are blindly active and thy light
 We have forgone.

RISHI

Who art thou, warrior armed gloriously
 Like the sun?
 Thy gait is as an empire and thine eye
 Dominion.

MANU

King Manu, of the Aryan peoples lord,
Greets thee, Sage.

RISHI

I know thee, King, earth to whose sleepless sword
Was heritage.
The high Sun's distant glories gave thee forth
On being's edge:
Where the slow skies of the auroral North
Lead in the morn
And flaming dawns for ever on heaven's verge
Wheel and turn,
'Thundering remote the clamorous Arctic surge
Saw thee born.
There 'twas thy lot these later Fates to build,
This race of man
New-fashion. O watcher with the mountains wild,
The icy plain,
Thee I too, asleep, have watched, both when the Pole
Was brightening wan
And when like a wild beast the darkness stole
Prowling and slow
Alarming with its silent march the soul.
O King, I know
Thy purpose; for the vacant ages roll
Since man below
Conversed with God in friendship. Thou, reborn
For men perplexed,
Seekest in this dim æon and forlorn
With evils vexed
The vanished light. For like this Arctic land
Death has annexed

To sleep, our being's summits cold and grand
Where God abides,
Repel the tread of thought. I too, O King,
In winds and tides
Have sought Him, and in armies thundering,
And where Death strides
Over whole nations. Action, thought and peace
Were questioned, sleep,
And waking, but I had no joy of these,
Nor ponderings deep,
And pity was not sweet enough, nor good
My will could keep.
Often I found Him for a moment, stood
Astonished, then
It fell from me. I could not hold the bliss,
The force for men,
My brothers. Beauty ceased my heart to please,
Brightness in vain
Recalled the vision of the light that glows
Suns behind:
I hated the rich fragrance of the rose;
Weary and blind,
I tired of the suns and stars; then came
With broken mind
To heal me of the rash devouring flame,
The dull disease,
And sojourned with this mountain's summits bleak,
These frozen seas.
King, the blind dazzling snows have made me meek,
Cooled my unease.
Pride could not follow, nor the restless will
Come and go;
My mind within grew holy, calm and still
Like the snow.

MANU

O thou who wast with chariots formidable
And with the bow!
Voiceless and white the cold unchanging hill,
Has it then
A mightier presence, deeper mysteries
Than human men?
The warm low hum of crowds, towns, villages,
The sun and rain,
The village maidens to the water bound,
The happy herds,
The fluting of the shepherd lads, the sound
Myriad of birds,
Speak these not clearer to the heart, convey
More subtle words?
Here is but great dumb night, an awful day
Inert and dead.

RISHI

The many's voices fill the listening ear,
Distract the head:
The One is silence; on the snows we hear
Silence tread.

MANU

What hast thou garnered from the crags that lour,
The icy field?

RISHI

O King, I spurned this body's death; a Power
There was, concealed,
That raised me. Rescued from the pleasant bars
Our longings build,
My wingèd soul went up above the stars
Questing for God.

MANU

Oh, didst thou meet Him then? in what bright field
Upon thy road?

RISHI

I asked the heavenly wanderers as they wheeled
For His abode.

MANU

Could glorious Saturn and his rings of hue
Direct thy flight?

RISHI

Sun could not tell, nor any planet knew
Its source of light,
Nor could I glean that knowledge though I paced
The world's beyond
And into outer nothingness have gazed.
Time's narrow sound
I crossed, the termless flood where on the Snake
One slumbers throned,
Attempted. But the ages from Him break
Blindly and Space
Forgets its origin. Then I returned
Where luminous blaze
Deathless and ageless in their ease unearned
The ethereal race.

MANU

Did the gods tell thee? Has Varuna seen
The high God's face?

RISHI

How shall they tell of Him who marvel at sin
And smile at grief?

MANU

Did He not send His blissful Angels down
For thy relief?

RISHI

The Angels know Him not, who fear His frown,
Have fixed belief.

MANU

Is there no heaven of eternal light
Where He is found?

RISHI

The heavens of the Three have beings bright
Their portals round,
And I have journeyed to those regions blest,
Those hills renowned.
In Vishnu's house where wide Love builds his nest,
My feet have stood.

MANU

Is he not That, the blue-winged Dove of peace,
Father of Good?

RISHI

Nor Brahma, though the suns and hills and seas
Are called his brood.

MANU

Is God a dream then? are the heavenly coasts
Visions vain?

RISHI

I came to Shiva's roof; the flitting ghosts
Compelled me in.

MANU

Is He then God whom the forsaken seek,
Things of sin?

RISHI

He sat on being's summit grand, a peak
Immense of fire.

MANU

Knows He the secret of release from tears
And from desire?

RISHI

His voice is the last murmur silence hears,
Tranquil and dire.

MANU

The silence calls us then and shall enclose?

RISHI

Our true abode
Is here and in the pleasant house He chose
To harbour God.

MANU

In vain thou hast travelled the unwonted stars
And the void hast trod!

RISHI

King, not in vain. I knew the tedious bars
That I had fled,
To be His arms whom I have sought; I saw
How earth was made
Out of His being; I perceived the Law,
The Truth, the Vast,
From which we came and which we are; I heard
The ages past

Whisper their history, and I knew the Word
That forth was cast
Into the unformed potency of things
To build the suns.
Through endless Space and on Time's iron wings
A rhythm runs
Our lives pursue, and till the strain's complete
That now so moans
And falters, we upon this greenness meet,
That measure tread.

MANU

Is earth His seat? this body His poor hold
Infirmly made?

RISHI

I flung off matter like a robe grown old;
Matter was dead.

MANU

Sages have told of vital force behind:
It is God then?

RISHI

The vital spirits move but as a wind
Within men.

MANU

Mind then is lord that like a sovereign sways
Delight and pain?

RISHI

Mind is His wax to write and, written, rase
Form and name.

MANU

Is thought not He who has immortal eyes
Time cannot dim?

RISHI

Higher, O King, the still voice bade me rise
Than thought's clear dream.
Deep in the luminous secrecy, the mute
Profound of things,
Where murmurs never sound of harp or lute
And no voice sings,
Light is not, nor our darkness, nor these bright
Thunderings,
In the deep steady voiceless core of white
And burning bliss,
The sweet vast centre and the cave divine
Called Paradise,
He dwells within us all who dwells not in
Aught that is.

MANU

Rishi, thy thoughts are like the blazing sun
Eye cannot face.
How shall our souls on that bright awful One
Hope even to gaze
Who lights the world from His eternity
With a few rays?

RISHI

Dare on thyself to look, thyself art He,
O Aryan, then.
There is no thou nor I, beasts of the field,
Nor birds, nor men,
But flickerings on a many-sided shield
Pass and remain,

And this is winged and that with poisonous tongue
Hissing coils.
We love ourselves and hate ourselves, are wrung
With woes and toils
To slay ourselves or from ourselves to win
Shadowy spoils.
And through it all, the rumour and the din,
Voices roam,
Voices of harps, voices of rolling seas,
That rarely come
And to our inborn old affinities
Call us home.
Shadows upon the many-sided Mind
Arrive and go,
Shadows that shadows see; the vain pomps wind
Above, below,
While in their hearts the single mighty God
Whom none can know,
Guiding the mimic squadrons with His nod
Watches it all—
Like transient shapes that sweep with half-guessed truth
A luminous wall.

MANU

Alas! is life then vain? Our gorgeous youth
Lithe and tall,
Our sweet fair women with their tender eyes
Outshining stars,
The mighty meditations of the wise,
The grandiose wars,
The blood, the fiery strife, the clenched dead hands,
The circle sparse,
The various labour in a hundred lands,
Are all these shows

To please some audience cold? as in a vase
 Lily and rose,
 Mixed snow and crimson, for a moment blaze
 Till someone throws
 The withered petals in some outer dust,
 Heeding not,—
 The virtuous man made one with the unjust,
 Is this our lot?

RISHI

O King, sight is not vain, nor any sound.
 Weeds that float
 Upon a puddle and the majestic round
 Of the suns
 Are thoughts eternal,—what man loves to laud
 And what he shuns;
 Through glorious things and base the wheel of God
 For ever runs.
 O King, no thought is vain; our very dreams
 Substantial are;
 The light we see in fancy, yonder gleams
 In the star.

MANU

Rishi, are we both dreams and real? the near
 Even as the far?

RISHI

Dreams are we not, O King, but see dreams, fear
 Therefore and strive.
 Like poets in a wondrous world of thought
 Always we live,
 Whose shapes from out ourselves to being brought
 Abide and thrive.

The poet from his vast and labouring mind
Brings brilliant out
A living world; forth into space they wind,
The shining rout,
And hate and love, and laugh and weep, enjoy,
Fight and shout,
King, lord and beggar, tender girl and boy,
Foemen, friends;
So to His creatures God's poetic mind
A substance lends.
The Poet with dazzling inspiration blind,
Until it ends,
Forgets Himself and lives in what He forms;
For ever His soul
Through chaos like a wind creating storms,
Till the stars roll
Through ordered space and the green lands arise,
The snowy Pole,
Ocean and this great heaven full of eyes,
And sweet sounds heard,
Man with his wondrous soul of hate and love,
And beast and bird,—
Yes, He creates the worlds and heaven above
With a single word;
And these things being Himself are real, yet
Are they like dreams,
For He awakes to self He could forget
In what He seems.
Yet, King, deem nothing vain: through many veils
This Spirit gleams.
The dreams of God are truths and He prevails.
Then all His time
Cherish thyself, O King, and cherish men,
Anchored in Him.

MANU

Upon the silence of the sapphire main
 Waves that sublime
 Rise at His word and when that fiat's stilled
 Are hushed again,
 So is it, Rishi, with the Spirit concealed,
 Things and men?

RISHI

Hear then the truth. Behind this visible world
 The eyes see plain,
 Another stands, and in its folds are curled
 Our waking dreams.
 Dream is more real, which, while here we wake,
 Unreal seems.
 From that our mortal life and thoughts we take.
 Its fugitive gleams
 Are here made firm and solid; there they float
 In a magic haze,
 Melody swelling note on absolute note,
 A lyric maze,
 Beauty on beauty heaped pell-mell to chain
 The enchanted gaze,
 Thought upon mighty thought with grandiose strain
 Weaving the stars.
 This is that world of dream from which our race
 Came; by these bars
 Of body now enchained, with laggard pace,
 Borne down with cares,
 A little of that rapture to express
 We labour hard,
 A little of that beauty, music, thought
 With toil prepared;

And if a single strain is clearly caught,
Then our reward
Is great on earth, and in the world that floats
Lingering awhile
We hear the fullness and the jarring notes
Reconcile,—
Then travel forwards. So we slowly rise,
And every mile
Of our long journey mark with eager eyes;
So we progress
With gurge of revolution and recoil,
Slaughter and stress
Of anguish because without fruit we toil,
Without success;
Even as a ship upon the stormy flood
With fluttering sails
Labours towards the shore; the angry mood
Of Ocean swells,
Calms come and favouring winds, but yet afar
The harbour pales
In evening mists and Ocean threatens war:
Such is our life.
Of this be sure, the mighty game goes on,
The glorious strife,
Until the goal predestined has been won.
Not on the cliff
To be shattered has our ship set forth of old,
Nor in the surge
To founder. Therefore, King, be royal, bold,
And through the urge
Of winds, the reboant thunders and the close
Tempestuous gurge
Press on for ever laughing at the blows
Of wind and wave.

The haven must be reached; we rise from pyre,
 We rise from grave,
 We mould our future by our past desire,
 We break, we save,
 We find the music that we could not find,
 The thought think out
 We could not then perfect, and from the mind
 That brilliant rout
 Of wonders marshal into living forms.
 End then thy doubt;
 Grieve not for wounds, nor fear the violent storms,
 For grief and pain
 Are errors of the clouded soul; behind
 They do not stain
 The living spirit who to these is blind.
 Torture, disdain,
 Defeat and sorrow give him strength and joy:
 'Twas for delight
 He sought existence, and if pains alloy,
 'Tis here in night
 Which we call day. The Yogin knows, O King,
 Who in his might
 Travels beyond the mind's imagining,
 The worlds of dream.
 For even they are shadows, even they
 Are not,—they seem.
 Behind them is a mighty blissful day
 From which they stream.
 The heavens of a million creeds are these:
 Peopled they teem
 By creatures full of joy and radiant ease.
 There is the mint
 From which we are the final issue, types
 Which here we print

In dual letters. There no torture grips,
Joy cannot stint
Her streams,—beneath a more than mortal sun
Through golden air
The spirits of the deathless regions run.
But we must dare
To still the mind into a perfect sleep
And leave this lair
Of gross material flesh which we would keep
Always, before
The guardians of felicity will ope
The golden door.
That is our home and that the secret hope
Our hearts explore.
To bring those heavens down upon the earth
We all descend,
And fragments of it in the human birth
We can command.
Perfect millenniums are sometimes, until
In the sweet end
All secret heaven upon earth we spill,
Then rise above
Taking mankind with us to the abode
Of rapturous Love,
The bright epiphany whom we name God,
Towards whom we drove
In spite of weakness, evil, grief and pain.
He stands behind
The worlds of Sleep; He is and shall remain
When they grow blind
To individual joys; for even these
Are shadows, King,
And gloriously into that lustre cease
From which they spring.

We are but sparks of that most perfect fire,
 Waves of that sea:
 From Him we come, to Him we go, desire
 Eternally,
 And so long as He wills, our separate birth
 Is and shall be.
 Shrink not from life, O Aryan, but with mirth
 And joy receive
 His good and evil, sin and virtue, till
 He bids thee leave.
 But while thou livest, perfectly fulfil
 Thy part, conceive
 Earth as thy stage, thyself the actor strong,
 The drama His.
 Work, but the fruits to God alone belong,
 Who only is.
 Work, love and know,—so shall thy spirit win
 Immortal bliss.
 Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O King,
 Fear not to enjoy;
 For Death's a passage, grief a fancied thing
 Fools to annoy.
 From self escape and find in love alone
 A higher joy.

MANU

O Rishi, I have wide dominion,
 The earth obeys
 And heaven opens far beyond the sun
 Her golden gaze.
 But Him I seek, the still and perfect One,—
 The Sun, not rays.

RISHI

Seek Him upon the earth. For thee He set
In the huge press
Of many worlds to build a mighty state
For man's success,
Who seeks his goal. Perfect thy human might,
Perfect the race.
For thou art He, O King. Only the night
Is on thy soul
By thy own will. Remove it and recover
The serene whole
Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover
To God the goal.

In the Moonlight

If now must pause the bullocks' jingling tune,
 Here let it be beneath the dreaming trees
 Supine and huge that hang upon the breeze,
 Here in the wide eye of the silent moon.

How living a stillness reigns! The night's hushed rules
 All things obey but three, the slow wind's sigh
 Among the leaves, the cricket's ceaseless cry,
 The frog's harsh discord in the ringing pools.

Yet they but seem the silence to increase
 And dreadful wideness of the inhuman night.
 The whole hushed world immeasurable might
 Be watching round this single spot of peace.

So boundless is the darkness and so rife
 With thoughts of infinite reach that it creates
 A dangerous sense of space and abrogates
 The wholesome littleness of human life.

The common round that each of us must tread
 Now seems a thing unreal; we forget
 The heavy yoke the world on us has set,
 The slave's vain labour earning tasteless bread.

Space hedges us and Time our hearts o'ertakes;
 Our bounded senses and our boundless thought
 Strive through the centuries and are slowly brought
 Back to the source whence their divergence wakes.

The source that none have traced, since none can know
Whether from Heaven the eternal waters well
Through Nature's matted locks, as Ganges fell,
Or from some dismal nether darkness flow.

Two genii in the dubious heart of man,
Two great unhappy foes together bound
Wrestle and strive to win unhampered ground;
They strive for ever since the race began.

One from his body like a bridge of fire
Mounts upward azure-winged with eager eyes;
One in his brain deep-mansioned labouring lies
And clamps to earth the spirit's high desire.

Here in this moonlight with strange visions rife
I seem to see their vast peripheries
Without me in the sombre mighty trees,
And, hark! their silence turns the wheels of life.

These are the middle and the first. Are they
The last too? Has the duel then no close?
Shall neither vanquish of the eternal foes,
Nor even at length this moonlight turn to day?

Our age has made an idol of the brain, .
The last adored a purer presence; yet
In Asia like a dove immaculate
He lurks deep-brooding in the hearts of men.

But Europe comes to us bright-eyed and shrill.
"A far delusion was that mounting fire,
An impulse balked and an unjust desire;
It fades as we ascend the human hill."

She cries to us to labour in the light
 Of common things, grow beautiful and wise
 On strong material food, nor vex our eyes
 With straining after visionary delight.

Ah, beautiful and wise, but to what end?
 Europe knows not, nor any of her schools
 Who scorn the higher thought for dreams of fools;
 Riches and joy and power meanwhile are gained.

Gained and then lost! For Death the heavy grip
 Shall loosen, Death shall cloud the laughing eye,
 And he who broke the nations soon shall lie
 More helpless than a little child asleep.

And after? Nay, for death is end and term.
 A fiery dragon through the centuries curled,
 He feeds upon the glories of the world
 And the vast mammoth dies before the worm.

Stars run their cycle and are quenched; the suns
 Born from the night are to the night returned,
 When the cold tenebrous spaces have inurned
 The listless phantoms of the Shining Ones.

From two dead worlds a burning world arose
 Of which the late putrescent fruit is man;
 From chill dark space his roll of life began
 And shall again in icy quiet close.

Our lives are but a transitory breath:
 Mean pismires in the sad and dying age
 Of a once glorious planet, on the edge
 Of bitter pain we wait eternal death.

Watering the ages with our sweat and blood
We pant towards some vague ideal state
And by the effort fiercer ills create,
Working by lasting evil transient good.

Insults and servitude we bear perforce;
With profitable crimes our souls we rack,
Vexing ourselves lest earth our seed should lack
Who needs us not in her perpetual course;

Then down into the earth descend and sleep
For ever, and the lives for which we toiled
Forget us, who when they their turn have moiled,
Themselves forgotten into silence creep.

Why is it all, the labour and the din,
And wherefore do we plague our souls and vex
Our bodies or with doubts our days perplex?
Death levels soon the virtue with the sin.

If Death be end and close the useless strife,
Strive not at all, but take what ease you may
And make a golden glory of the day,
Exhaust the little honey of your life.

Fear not to take her beauty to your heart
Whom you so utterly desire; you do
No hurt to any, for the inner you
So cherished is a dream that shall depart.

The wine of life is sweet; let no man stint
His longing or refuse one passionate hope.
Why should we cabin in such infinite scope,
Restrict the issue of such golden mint?

Society forbids? It for our sakes
 Was fashioned; if it seek to fence around
 Our joys and pleasures in such narrow bound,
 It gives us little for the much it takes.

Nor need we hearken to the gospel vain
 That bids men curb themselves to help mankind.
 We lose our little chance of bliss, then blind
 And silent lie for ever. Whose the gain?

What helps it us if so mankind be served?
 Ourselves are blotted out from joy and light,
 Having no profit of the sunshine bright,
 While others reap the fruit our toils deserved.

O this new god who has replaced the old!
 He dies to-day, he dies to-morrow, dies
 At last for ever, and the last sunrise
 Shall have forgotten him extinct and cold.

But virtue to itself is joy enough?
 Yet if to us sin taste diviner? why
 Should we not herd in Epicurus' sty
 Whom Nature made not of a Stoic stuff?

For Nature being all, desire must reign.
 It is too sweet and strong for us to slay
 Upon a nameless altar, saying nay
 To honied urgings for no purpose plain.

A strange unreal gospel Science brings,—
 Being animals to act as angels might;
 Mortals we must put forth immortal might
 And flutter in the void celestial wings.

"Ephemeral creatures, for the future live,"
 She bids us, "gather in for unborn men

Knowledge and joy, and forfeit, nor complain,
The present which alone is yours to give."

Man's immortality she first denies

And then assumes what she rejects, made blind
By sudden knowledge, the majestic Mind
Within her smiling at her sophistries.

Not so shall Truth extend her flight sublime,
Pass from the poor beginnings she has made
And with the splendour of her wings displayed
Range through the boundaries of Space and Time.

Clamp her not down to her material finds!
She shall go further. She shall not reject
The light within, nor shall the dialect
Of unprogressive pedants bar men's minds.

We seek the Truth and will not pause nor fear.
Truth we will have and not the sophist's pleas;
Animals, we will take our grosser ease,
Or, spirits, heaven's celestial music hear.

The intellect is not all; a guide within
Awaits our question. He it was informed
The reason, He surpasses; and unformed
Presages of His mightiness begin.

Nor mind submerged, nor self subliminal,
But the great Force that makes the planets wheel
Through ether and the sun in flames reveal
His godhead, is in us perpetual.

That Force in us is body, that is mind,
And what is higher than the mind is He.
This was the secret Science could not see;
Aware of death, to life her eyes were blind.

Through chemistry she seeks the source of life,
 Nor knows the mighty laws that she has found,
 Are Nature's bye-laws merely, meant to ground
 A grandiose freedom building peace by strife.

The organ for the thing itself she takes,
 The brain for mind, the body for the soul,
 Nor has she patience to explore the whole,
 But like a child a hasty period makes.

"It is enough," she says, "I have explored
 The whole of being; nothing now remains
 But to put details in and count my gains."
 So she deceives herself, denies her Lord.

Therefore He manifests Himself; once more
 The wonders of the secret world within
 Wrapped yet with an uncertain mist begin
 To look from that thick curtain out; the door

Opens. Her days are numbered, and not long
 Shall she be suffered to belittle thus
 Man and restrain from his tempestuous
 Uprising that immortal spirit strong.

He rises now; for God has taken birth.
 The revolutions that pervade the world
 Are faint beginnings and the discus hurled
 Of Vishnu speeds down to enring the earth.

The old shall perish; it shall pass away,
 Expunged, annihilated, blotted out;
 And all the iron bands that ring about
 Man's wide expansion shall at last give way.

Freedom, God, Immortality; the three
 Are one and shall be realised at length,

Love, Wisdom, Justice, Joy and utter Strength
Gather into a pure felicity.

It comes at last, the day foreseen of old,
What John in Patmos saw, what Shelley dreamed,
Vision and vain imagination deemed,
The City of Delight, the Age of Gold.

The Iron Age is ended. Only now
The last fierce spasm of the dying past
Shall shake the nations, and when that has passed,
Earth washed of ills shall raise a fairer brow.

This is man's progress; for the Iron Age
Prepares the Age of Gold. What we call sin,
Is but man's leavings as from deep within
The Pilot guides him in his pilgrimage.

He leaves behind the ill with strife and pain,
Because it clings and constantly returns,
And in the fire of suffering fiercely burns
More sweetness to deserve, more strength to gain.

He rises to the good with Titan wings:
And this the reason of his high unease,
Because he came from the infinities
To build immortally with mortal things;

The body with increasing soul to fill,
Extend Heaven's claim upon the toiling earth
And climb from death to a diviner birth
Grasped and supported by immortal Will.

PERSEUS THE DELIVERER

A DRAMA

THE LEGEND OF PERSEUS

ACRISIUS, the Argive king, warned by an oracle that his daughter's son would be the agent of his death, hoped to escape his doom by shutting her up in a brazen tower. But Zeus, the King of the Gods, descended into her prison in a shower of gold and Danaë bore to him a son named Perseus. Danaë and her child were exposed in a boat without sail or oar on the sea, but here too fate and the gods intervened and, guided by a divine protection, the boat bore her safely to the Island of Seriphos. There Danaë was received and honoured by the King. When Perseus had grown to manhood the King, wishing to marry Danaë, decided to send him to his death and to that end ordered him to slay the Gorgon Medusa in the wild, unknown and snowy North and bring to him her head the sight of which turned men to stone. Perseus, aided by Athene, the Goddess of Wisdom, who gave him the divine sword Herpe, winged shoes to bear him through the air, her shield or ægis and the cap of invisibility, succeeded in his quest after many adventures. In his returning he came to Syria and found Andromeda, daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopea, King and Queen of Syria, chained to the rocks by the people to be devoured by a sea-monster as an atonement for her mother's impiety against the sea-god, Poseidon. Perseus slew the monster and rescued and wedded Andromeda.

In this piece the ancient legend has been divested of its original character of a heroic myth; it is made the nucleus round which there could grow the scenes of a romantic story of human temperament and life-impulses on the Elizabethan model. The country in which the action is located is a Syria of romance, not of history. Indeed a Hellenic legend could not at all be set in the environments of the life of a Semitic people and its early Aramæan civilisation: the town of Cepheus must be looked at as a Greek colony with a blonde Achæan dynasty ruling a Hellenised people who worship an old Mediterranean deity under a Greek name. In a romantic work of imagination of this type these outrages on history do not matter. Time there is more than Einsteinian in its relativity, the creative imagination is its sole disposer and arranger; fantasy reigns sovereign; the names of ancient countries and peoples are brought in only as fringes of a decorative background; anachronisms romp in wherever they can get an easy admittance, ideas and associations from all climes and epochs

mingle; myth, romance and realism make up a single whole. For here the stage is the human mind of all times: the subject is an incident in its passage from a semi-primitive temperament surviving in a fairly advanced outward civilisation to a brighter intellectualism and humanism—never quite safe against the resurgence of the dark or violent life-forces which are always there subdued or subordinated or somnolent in the make-up of civilised man—and the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his ultimate destiny to become.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

PALLAS ATHENE.

POSEIDON.

PERSEUS, son of Zeus and Danaë.

CEPHEUS, King of Syria.

IOLAUS, son of Cepheus and Cassiopea.

POLYDAON, priest of Poseidon.

PHINEUS, King of Tyre.

TYRNAUS, }
SMERDAS, } Merchants of Babylonia, wrecked on the coast of Syria.

THEROPS, a popular leader.

PERISSUS, a citizen butcher.

DERCETES, a Syrian captain.

NEBASSAR, captain of the Chaldean Guard.

CHABRIAS, }
DAMOETES, }
MEGAS, } townsmen and villagers.
GARDAS, }
MORUS, }
SYRAX, }

CIREAS, a servant in the temple of Poseidon.

MEDES, an usher in the palace.

CASSIOPEA, princess of Chaldea, Queen of Syria.

ANDROMEDA, daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopea.

CYDONE, mistress of Iolaus.

PRAXILLA, head of the palace household in the women's apartments.

DIOMEDE, a slave-girl, servant and playmate of Andromeda.

BALTIS, }
PASITHEA, } Syrian women.

SCENE.—*The city of Cepheus, the seashore, the temple of Poseidon on the headland and the surrounding country.*

PROLOGUE

*The Ocean in tumult, and the sky in storm: Pallas
Athene appears in the heavens with lightnings playing over her
head and under her feet.*

ATHENE

Errand of waters rustling through the world,
Vast Ocean, call thy ravenous waves that march
With blue fierce nostrils quivering for prey,
Back to thy feet. Hush thy impatient surges
At my divine command and do my will.

VOICES OF THE SEA

Who art thou layest thy serene command
Upon the untamed waters?

ATHENE

I am Pallas,
Daughter of the Omnipotent.

VOICES

What wouldst thou?
For we cannot resist thee; our clamorous hearts
Are hushed in terror at thy marble feet.

ATHENE

Awake your dread Poseidon. Bid him rise
And come before me.

VOICES

Let thy compelling voice
Awake him: for the sea is hushed.

ATHENE

Arise,
Illimitable Poseidon! let thy blue
And streaming tresses mingle with the foam

Emerging into light.

Poseidon appears upon the waters.

POSEIDON

What quiet voice
Compels me from my rocky pillow piled
Upon the floor of the enormous deep?

VOICES

A whiteness and a strength is in the skies.

POSEIDON

How art thou white and beautiful and calm,
Yet clothed in tumult! Heaven above thee shakes
Wounded with lightnings, goddess, and the sea
Flees from thy dreadful tranquil feet. Thy calm
Troubles me: who art thou, dweller in the light?

ATHENE

I am Athene.

POSEIDON

Virgin formidable

In beauty, disturber of the ancient world!
Ever thou seekest to enslave to man
The eternal Universe, and our huge motions
That shake the mountains and upheave the seas
Wouldst with the glancing visions of thy brain
Coerce and bridle.

ATHENE

Me the Omnipotent

Made from His being to lead and discipline
The immortal spirit of man, till it attain
To order and magnificent mastery
Of all his outward world.

POSEIDON

What wouldst thou of me?

ATHENE

The powers of the earth have kissed my feet
In deep submission, and they yield me tribute,
Olives and corn and all fruit-bearing trees,
And silver from the bowels of the hills,
Marble and iron ore. Fire is my servant.
But thou, Poseidon, with thy kindred gods
And the wild wings of air resist me. I come
To set my feet upon thy azure locks,
O shaker of the cliffs. Adore thy sovereign.

POSEIDON

The anarchy of the enormous seas
Is mine, O terrible Athene: I sway
Their billows with my nod. Man's feeble feet
Leave there no traces, nor his destiny
Has any hold upon the shifting waves.

ATHENE

Thou severest him with thy unmeasured wastes
Whom I would weld in one. But I will lead him
Over thy waters, thou wild thunderer,
Spurning thy tops in hollowed fragile trees.
He shall be confident in me and dare
The immeasurable oceans till the West
Mingles with India, and reach the northern isles
That dwell beneath my dancing ægis bright,
Snow-weary. He shall, armed with clamorous fire,
Rush o'er the angry waters when the whale
Is stunned between two waves and slay his foe
Betwixt the thunders. Therefore I bid thee not,
O azure strong Poseidon, to abate
Thy savage tumults: rather his march oppose.
For through the shocks of difficulty and death
Man shall attain his godhead.

POSEIDON

What then desir'st thou,

Athene?

ATHENE

On yonder inhospitable coast
Far-venturing merchants from the East, or those
Who put from Tyre towards Atlantic gains,
Are by thy trident fiercely shaken forth
Upon the jagged rocks, and who escape,
The gay and savage Syrians on their altars
Massacre hideously, thee to propitiate,
Moloch-Poseidon of the Syrian coasts,
Dagon of Gaza, lord of many names
And many natures, many forms of power
Who rulest from Philistia to the north,
A terror and a woe. O iron King,
Desist from blood, be glad of kindlier gifts
And suffer men to live.

POSEIDON

Behold, Athene,

My waters! see them lift their foam-white tops
Charging from sky to sky in rapid tumult:
Admire their force, admire their thunderous speed.
With green hooves and white manes they trample onwards.
My mighty voices fill the world, Athene.
Shall I permit the grand anarchic seas
To be a road and the imperious Ocean
A means of merchandise? Shall the frail keels
Of thy ephemeral mortals score its back
With servile furrows and petty souls of men
Triumphing tame the illimitable sea?
I am not of the mild and later gods,
But of that elder world; Lemuria

And old Atlantis raised me crimson altars,
And my huge nostrils keep that scent of blood
For which they quiver. Return into thy heavens,
Pallas Athene, I into my deep.

ATHENE

Dash then thy billows up against my ægis
In battle! think not to hide in thy deep oceans;
For I will drive thy waters from the world
And leave thee naked to the light.

POSEIDON

Dread virgin!

I will not war with thee, armipotent.

ATHENE

Then send thy champion forth to meet my champion,
And let their conflict govern ours, Poseidon.

POSEIDON

Who is thy champion?

ATHENE

Perseus, the Olympian's son,
Whom Danaë in her strong brazen tower,
Acrisius' daughter, bore, by heavenly gold
Lapped into slumber: for of that shining rain
He is the beautiful offspring.

POSEIDON

The parricide

That is to be? But my sea-monster's fangs
And fiery breathings shall prevent that murder.
Farewell, Athene.

ATHENE

Farewell, until I press
My feet upon thy blue enormous mane
And add thy Ocean to my growing empire.

Poseidon disappears into the sea.

He dives into the deep and with a din
The thunderous divided waters meet
Above his grisly head. Thou wingest, Perseus,
From northern snows to this fair sunny land,
Not knowing in the night what way thou wendest;
But the dawn comes and over earth's far rim
The round sun rises, as thyself shalt rise
On Syria and thy rosy Andromeda,
A thing of light. Rejoice, thou famous hero!
Be glad of love, be glad of life, whose bosom
Harbours the quiet strength of pure Athene.

She disappears into light.

ACT I

SCENE 1

A rocky and surf-beat margin of land walled in with great frowning cliffs.

Cireas, Diomedes.

Cir. Diomedes? You here so early and in this wild wanton weather!

Diom. I can find no fault in the weather, Cireas; it is brilliant and frolicsome.

Cir. The rain has wept itself out and the sun has ventured into the open; but the wind is shouting like mad and the sea is still in a mighty passion. Has your mistress Andromeda sent you then with matin-offerings to Poseidon, or are you walking here to whip the red roses in your cheeks redder with the sea-wind?

Diom. My mistress cares as much for your Poseidon as I for your glum beetle-browed priest Polydaon. But you, Cireas? are you walking here to whip the red nose of you redder with the sea-wind or to soothe with them the marks of his holiness's cudgel?

Cir. I must carry up these buckets of sea-water to swab down the blue-haired old fellow in the temple. Hang the robustious storm-shaken curmudgeon! I have rubbed him and scrubbed him and bathed him and swathed him for these eighteen years, yet he never sent me one profitable piece of wreckage out of his sea yet. A gold bracelet, now, crusted with jewels, dropped from the arm of some drowned princess, or a sealed casket velvet-lined with a priceless vase carried by the Rhodian merchants: that would not

have beggared him! And I with so little could have bought my liberty.

Diom. May be 'twas that he feared. For who would wish to lose such an expert body-servant as you, my Cireas?

Cir. Zeus! if I thought that, I would leave his unwashed back to itch for a fortnight. But these Gods are kittle cattle to joke with. They have too many spare monsters about in their stables trained to snap up offenders for a light breakfast.

Diom. And how prosper the sacrifices, Cireas? I hope you keep your god soothingly and daintily fed in this hot summer season?

Cir. Alack, poor old Poseidon! He has had nothing but goats and sea-urchins lately, and that is poor food for a palate inured to *homme à la Phénicienne*, Diomedes. It is his own fault, he should provide wreckage more freely. But black Polydaon's forehead grows blacker every day: he will soon be as mad as Cybele's bull on the headland. I am every moment in terror of finding myself tumbled on the altar for a shipwrecked Phœnician and old blackbrows hacking about in search of my heart with his holy carving-tools.

Diom. You should warn him beforehand that your heart is in your paunch hidden under twenty pounds of fat: so shall he have less cutting-exercise and you an easier exit.

Cir. Out! would you have me slit for a water-god's dinner? Is this your tenderness for me?

Diom. Heaven forbid, dear Cireas. Syria would lose half her scampishness if you departed untimely to a worse world.

Cir. Away from here, you long sauciness, you thin edge of naughty satire. But, no! First tell me, what news of the palace? They say King Phineus will wed the Princess Andromeda.

Diom. Yes, but not till the Princess Andromeda weds King Phineus. What noise is that?

Cir. It was the cry of many men in anguish.
He climbs up a rock.

Diom. Zeus, what a wail was there! surely a royal
Huge ship from Sidon or the Nile has kissed
Our ragged beaches.

Cir. A Phœnician galley
Is caught and spinning in the surf, the men
Urge desperate oars in vain. Hark, with a crash
She rushes on the boulders' iron fangs
That rip her tender sides. How the white ship
Battered against them by the growling surf
Screams like a woman tortured! From all sides
The men are shaken out, as rattling peas
Leap from a long and bursting sheath: these sink
Gurgling into the billows, those are pressed
And mangled on the jagged rocks.

Diom. O it must be
A memorable sight! help me up, Cireas.

Cir. No, no, for I must run and tell old blackbrows
That here's fresh meat for hungry grim Poseidon.

He climbs down and out running.
Diom. You disobliging dog! This is the first wreck in
eighteen months and I not to see it! I will try and climb
round the rock even if my neck and legs pay the forfeit.

She goes out in the opposite direction.

SCENE 2

The Same

Perseus descends on winged sandals from the clouds.

Pers. Rocks on the outland jagged with the sea,
 You slumbering promontories whose huge backs
 Jut into azure, and thou, O many-thundered
 Enormous Ocean, hail! Whatever lands
 Are ramparted with these forbidding shores,
 Yet if you hold felicitous roofs of men,
 Homes of delightful laughter, if you have streams
 Where chattering girls dip in their pitchers cool
 And dabble their white feet in the chill lapse
 Of waters, trees and a green-mantled earth,
 Cicales noisy in a million boughs
 Or happy cheep of common birds, I greet you,
 Syria or Egypt or Ionian shores,
 Perseus the son of Danaë, who long
 Have sojourned only with the hail-thrashed isles
 Wet with cold mists and by the boreal winds
 Snow-swathed. The angry voices of the surf
 Are welcome to me whose ears have long been sealed
 By rigorous silence in the snows. O even
 The wail of mortal misery I choose
 Rather than that intolerable hush;
 For this at least is human. Thee I praise,
 O mother Earth and thy guardian Sea, O Sun
 Of the warm south nursing fair life of men.

I will go down into bee-murmuring fields
 And mix with men and women in the corn
 And eat again accustomed food. But first
 This galley shattered on the sharp-toothed rocks
 I fly to succour. You are grown dear to me,
 You smiling weeping human faces, brightly
 Who move, who live, not like those stony masks
 And Gorgon visions of that monstrous world
 Beyond the snows. I would not lose you now
 In the dead surges of the inhuman flood.

He descends out of sight.

Iolaus enters with Cireas, Dercetes and soldiers.

Iol. Prepare your ambush, men, amid these boulders,
 But at the signal, leave your rocky lairs
 With level bristling points and gyre them in.

Cir. O Poseidon Ennosigaios, man-swallower, earth-shaker, I have swabbed thee for eighteen years. I pray thee tot up the price of those swabbings and be not dishonest with me nor miserly. Eighteen by three hundred and sixty-five by two, that is the sum of them: and forget not the leap years either, O great Poseidon.

Iol. Into our ambush, for I hear them come.

They conceal themselves. Perseus returns with Tyrnaus and Smerdas.

Pers. Chaldean merchants, would my speed to save
 Had matched the hawk's when he swoops down for
 slaughter.

So many beautiful bodies of strong men
 Lost in the surge, so many eager hopes
 Of happiness now quenched would still have gladdened
 The sunlight. Yet for two delightful lives
 Saved to the stir and motion of the world
 I praise the Gods that help us.

Tyr. Thou radiant youth
 Whose face is like a joyous god's for beauty,

- Whatever worth the body's life may have,
 I thank thee that 'tis saved. Smerdas, discharge
 That hapless humour from thy lids! If riches
 Are lost, the body, thy strong instrument
 To gather riches, is not lost, nor mind,
 The provident director of its labours.
- Smer.* Three thousand pieces of that wealthy stuff,
 Full forty chests all crammed with noble gems,
 All lost, all in a moment lost! We are beggars.
- Tyr.* Smerdas, not beggared yet of arm or brain.
- Smer.* The toil-marred peasant has as much.
- Pers.* Merchant,
 I sorrow for thy loss: all beautiful things
 Were meant to shine in the bright day, and grievous
 It is to know the senseless billows play with them.
 Yet life, most beautiful of all, is left thee.
 Is not mere sunlight something, and to breathe
 A joy? Be patient with the gods; they love not
 Rebellion and o'ertake it with fresh scourgings.
- Smer.* O that the sea had swallowed me and rolled
 In my dear treasure! Tell me, Syrian youth,
 Are there not divers in these parts, could pluck
 My wealth from the abyss?
- Pers.* Chaldean merchant,
 I am not of this country, but like thyself
 Hear first today the surf roar on its beaches.
- Smer.* Cursed be the moment when we neared its shores!
 O harsh sea-god, if thou wilt have my wealth,
 My soul, it was a cruel mercy then to leave
 This beggared empty body bared of all
 That made life sweet. Take this too, and everything.
- Iol.* (*stepping forward*)
 Thy prayer is granted thee, O Babylonian.
The soldiers appear and surround Perseus and the merchants.

Cir. All the good stuff drowned! O unlucky Cireas!
O greedy Poseidon!

Smer. Shield us! what are these threatening spear-points?
Tyr. Fate's.

This is that strange inhospitable coast
Where the wrecked traveller in his own warm blood
Is given guest-bath. (*draws*) Death's dice are yet to
throw.

Iol. Draw not in vain, strive not against the gods.
This is the shore near the temple where Poseidon
Sits ivory-limbed in his dim rock-hewn house
And nods above the bleeding mariner
His sapphire locks in gloom. You three are come,
A welcome offering to that long dry altar,
O happy voyagers. Your road is straight
To Elysium.

Pers. An evil and harsh religion
You practise in your land, stripling of Syria,
Yet since it is religion, do thy will,
If thou have power no less than will. And yet
I deem that ere I visit death's calm country,
I have far longer ways to tread.

Tyr. (*flinging away his sword*)

Take me.
I will not please the gods with impotent writhing
Under the harrow of my fate.

They seize Tyrnaus.

Smer. O wicked fool!
You might have saved me with that sword. Ah youth!
Ah radiant stranger! help me! thou art mighty.

Pers. Still, merchant, thou wouldst live?

Smer. I am dead with terror
Of these bright thirsty spears. O they will carve
My frantic heart out of my living bosom

To throw it bleeding on that hideous altar.
Save me, hero!

Pers. I war not with the gods for thee.
From belching fire or the deep-mouthed abyss
Of waters to have saved the meanest thing
That wears man's kindly semblance, is a joy.
But he is mad who for another's ease
Incurs the implacable pursuit of heaven.
Yet since each man on earth has privilege
To battle even against the gods for life,
Sweet life, lift up from earth thy fellow's sword;
I will protect meanwhile thy head from onset.

Smer. Alas, you mock me! I have no skill with weapons
Nor am a fighter. Save me!

The Syrians seize Smerdas.

Help! I will give thee
The wealth of Babylon when I am safe.

Pers. My sword is heaven's; it is not to be purchased.

Smerdas and Tyrnaus are led away.

Iol. Take too this radiance.

Pers. (*drawing his sword*)

Asian stripling, pause.

I am not weak of hand nor feeble of heart.
Thou art too young, too blithe, too beautiful;
I would not disarrange thy sunny curls
By any harsher touch than an embrace.

Iol. I too could wish to spare thy joyous body
From the black knife, whoe'er thou art, O stranger.
But grim compulsion drives and angry will
• Of the sea's lord, chafing that mortal men
Insult with their frail keels his rude strong oceans.
Therefore he built his grisly temple here,
And all who are broken in the unequal war
With surge and tempest, though they evade his rocks,

Must belch out anguished blood upon that altar
Miserably.

Pers. I come not from the Ocean.

Iol. There is no other way that men could come;
For this is ground forbidden to unknown feet.
(*smiling*)

Unless these gaudy pinions on thy shoes
Were wings indeed to bear thee through the void!

Pers. Are there not those who ask nor solid land
For footing nor the salt flood to buoy their motions?
Perhaps I am of these.

Iol. Of these thou art not.
The gods are sombre, terrible to gaze at,
Or, even if bright, remote, grand, formidable.
But thou art open and fair like our blue heavens
In Syria and thy radiant masculine body
Allures the eye. Yield! it may be the God
Will spare thee.

Pers. Set on thy war-dogs. Me alive
If they alive can take, I am content
To bleed a victim.

Iol. Art thou a demigod
To beat back with one blade a hundred spears?

Pers. My sword is in my hand and that shall answer.
I am tired of words.

Iol. Dercetes, wait. His face
Is beautiful as Heaven. O dark Poseidon,
What wilt thou do with him in thy dank caves
Under the grey abysms of the salt flood?
Spare him to me and sunlight.

Polydaon and Phineus enter from behind.

Derc. Prince, give the order.

Iol. Let this young sungod live.

Derc. It is forbidden.

Iol. But I allow it.

Poly. (coming forward)

And when did lenient Heaven
Make thee a godhead, Syrian Iolaus,
To set thy proud decree against Poseidon's?
Wilt thou rescind what Ocean's Zeus has ordered?

Iol. Polydaon—

Poly. Does a royal name on earth
Inflate so foolishly thy mortal pride,
Thou evenest thyself with the Olympians?
Beware, the blood of kings has dropped ere now
From the grey sacrificial knife.

Iol. Our blood!
Thou darest threaten me, presumptuous priest?
Back to thy blood-stained kennel! I absolve
This stranger.

Poly. Captain, take them both. You flinch?
Are you so fearful of the name of prince
He plays with? Fear rather dark Poseidon's anger.

Phin. Be wise, young Iolaus. Polydaon,
Thy zeal outstrips the reverence due to kings.

Iol. I need not thy protection, Tyrian Phineus:
This is my country.

He draws.

Phin. (aside to Polydaon)

It were well done to kill him now, his sword
Being out against the people's gods; for then
Who blames the god's avenger?

Poly. Will you accept,
Syrians, the burden of his sacrilege?
Upon them for Poseidon!

Derc. Seize them but slay not!
Let none dare shed the blood of Syria's kings.

Soldiers Poseidon! great Poseidon.

Pers. Iolaus,
Rein in thy sword: I am enough for these.

*He shakes his uncovered shield in the faces of the soldiers:
they stagger back covering their eyes.*

Iol. Gods, what a glory lights up Syria!

Poly. Amazement!

Is this a god opposes us? Back, back!

Cir. Master, master, skedaddle: run, run, good King of Tyre, it is scuttle or be scuttled. Zeus has come down to earth with feathered shoes and a shield made out of phosphorus.

He runs off, followed more slowly by Dercetes and the soldiers.

Phin. Whate'er thou art, yet thou shalt not outface me.

He advances with sword drawn.

Hast thou Heaven's thunders with thee too?

Poly. (pulling him back)

Back, Phineus!

The fiery-tasselled ægis of Athene
Shakes forth these lightnings, and an earthly sword
Were madness here.

He goes out with Phineus.

Iol. O radiant strong immortal,

Iolaus kneels to thee.

Pers. No, Iolaus.

Though great Athene breathes Olympian strength
Into my arm sometimes, I am no more
Than a brief mortal.

Iol. Art thou only man?

O then be Iolaus' friend and lover,
Who com'st to me like something all my own
Destined from other shores.

Pers. Give me thy hands,

O fair young child of the warm Syrian sun.
Embrace me! Thou art like a springing laurel
Fed upon sunlight by the murmuring waters.

Iol. Tell me thy name. What memorable earth
Gave thee to the azure?

- Pers.* I am from Argolis,
Perseus my name, the son of Danaë.
- Iol.* Come, Perseus, friend, with me: fierce entertainment
We have given, unworthy the fair joyousness
Thou carriest like a flag, but thou shalt meet
A kinder Syria. My royal father Cepheus
Shall welcome, my mother give thee a mother's greeting
And our Andromeda's delightful smile
Persuade thee of a world more full of beauty
Than thou hadst dreamed of.
- Pers.* I shall yet be glad with thee,
O Iolaus, in thy father's halls,
But I would not as yet be known in Syria.
Is there no pleasant hamlet near, hedged in
With orchard walls and green with unripe corn
And washed with bright and flitting waves, where I
Can harbour with the kindly village folk
And wake to cock-crow in the morning hours,
As in my dear Seriphos?
- Iol.* Such a village
Lurks near our hills,—there with my kind Cydone
Thou may'st abide at ease, until thou choose,
O Perseus, to reveal thyself to Syria.
I too can visit thee unquestioned.
- Pers.* Thither
Then lead me. I have a thirst for calm obscurity
And cottages and happy unambitious talk
And simple people. With these I would have rest,
Not in the laboured pomp of princely towns
Amid pent noise and purple masks of hate.
I will drink deep of pure humanity
And take the innocent smell of rain-drenched earth,
So shall I with a noble untainted mind
Rise from the strengthening soil to great adventure.
- They go out.*

SCENE 3

*The Palace of Cepheus. A room in the women's apartments.
Praxilla, to her enters Diomede.*

Diom. O Praxilla, Praxilla!

Prax. So, thou art back, thou tall inutility? Where wert thou lingering all this hour? I am tired of always whipping thee. I will hire thee out to a timber-merchant to carry logs from dawn to nightfall. Thou shalt learn what labour is.

Diom. Praxilla, O Praxilla! I am full to the throat with news. I pray you, rip me open.

Prax. Willingly.

She advances towards her with an uplifted knife.

Diom. (escaping)

A plague! can you not appreciate a fine metaphor when you hear it? I never saw so prosaic a mortal. The soul in you was born of a marriage between a saucepan and a broomstick.

Prax. Tell me your news. If it is good, I will excuse you your whipping.

Diom. I was out on the beach thinking to watch the seagulls flying and crying in the wind amidst the surf dashing and the black cliff-heads—

Prax. And could not Poseidon turn thee into a gull there among thy natural kindred? Thou wert better fitted with that shape than in a reasonable human body.

Diom. Oh then you shall hear the news tell itself, mistress, when the whole town has chewed it and rechewed it.

She is going.

Prax. Stop, you long-limbed impertinence. The news!

- Diom.* I'll be hanged if I tell you.
- Prax.* You shall be whipped, if you do not.
- Diom.* Well, your goddess Switch is a potent divinity. A ship with men from the East has broken on the headland below the temple and two Chaldeans are saved alive for the altar.
- Prax.* This is glorious news indeed.
- Diom.* It will be a great day when they are sacrificed!
- Prax.* We have not had such since the long galley from Cnossus grounded upon our shores and the temple was washed richly with blood and the altar blushed as thickly with hearts of victims as the King's throne with rubies. Poseidon was pleased that year and the harvest was so plentiful, men were brought in from beyond the hills to reap it.
- Diom.* There would have been a third victim, but Prince Iolaus drew sword on the priest Polydaon to defend him.
- Prax.* I hope this is not true.
- Diom.* I saw it.
- Prax.* Is the wild boy
In love with ruin? Not the King himself
Can help him if the grim sacrificant
Demand his fair young head: only a god
Could save him. And he was already in peril
From Polydaon's gloomy hate!
- Diom.* And Phineus'.
- Prax.* Hush, silly madcap, hush; or speak much lower.
- Diom.* Here comes my little queen of love, stepping
As daintily as a young bird in spring
When he would take the hearts of all the forest.
- Andromeda enters.*
- Prax.* You have slept late, Andromeda.
- Andr.* Have I?
The sun had risen in my dreams: perhaps

I feared to wake lest I should find all dark
Once more, Praxilla.

Diom. He has risen in your eyes,
For they are full of sunshine, little princess.

Andr. I have dreamed, Diomede, I have dreamed.

Diom. What did you dream?

Andr. I dreamed my sun had risen.
He had a face like the Olympian Zeus
And wings upon his feet. He smiled upon me,
Diomede.

Prax. Dreams are full of stranger fancies.
Why, I myself have seen hooved bears, winged lions,
And many other monsters in my dreams.

Andr. My sun was a bright god and bore a flaming sword
To kill all monsters.

Diom. I think I've seen today
Your sun, my little playmate.

Andr. No, you have not.
I'll not have any eyes see him but mine:
He is my own, my very own.

Diom. And yet
I saw him on the wild sea-beach this morning.

Prax. What mean you, Diomede?

Diom. (to *Andromeda*)

You have not heard?
A ship was flung upon the rocks this morning
And all her human burden drowned.

Andr. Alas!

Diom. It was a marvellous sight, my little playmate,
And made my blood with horror and admiration
Run richer in my veins. The great ship groaned
While the rough boulders dashed her into pieces,
The men with desperate shrieks went tumbling down
Mid laughter of the surge, strangled 'twixt billows
Or torn by strips upon the savage rocks

That tossed their mangled bodies back again
Into the cruel keeping of the surge.

Andr. O do not tell me any more! How had you heart
To look at what I cannot bear to hear?
For while you spoke, I felt as if the rocks
Were tearing my own limbs and the salt surge
Choking me.

Diom. I suppose it must have hurt them.
Yes, it was pitiful. Still, 'twas a sight.
Meanwhile the deep surf boomed their grandiose dirge
With fierce triumphant voices. The whole scene
Was like a wild stupendous sacrifice
Offered by the grey-filleted grim surges
On the gigantic altar of the rocks
To the calm cliffs seated like gods above.

Andr. Alas, the unhappy men, the poor drowned men
Who had young children somewhere whom they loved,
How could you watch them die! Had I been a god,
I would not let this cruel thing have happened.

Diom. Why do you weep for them? they were not Syrians.

Prax. Not they, but barbarous jabbering foreigners
From Indus or Arabia. Fie my child,
You sit upon the floor and weep for these?

Andr. When Iolaus fell upon the rocks
And hurt himself, you did not then forbid me
To weep!

Prax. He is your brother. That was loving,
Tender and right.

Andr. And these men were not brothers?
They too had sisters who will feel as I should
If my dear brother were to die so wretchedly.

Prax. Let their own sisters weep for them: we have
Enough of our own sorrows. You are young
And softly made: because you have yourself
No griefs, but only childhood's soon-dried tears,

You make a luxury of others' woe.
So when we watch a piteous tragedy,
We grace with real tears its painted sorrows.
When you are older and have true things to weep for,
Then you will understand.

Andr. I'll not be older!

I will not understand! I only know
That men are heartless and your gods most cruel.
I hate them!

Prax. Hush, Hush! You know not what you say,
You must not speak such things. Come, Diomedes,
Tell her the rest.

Andr. (*covering her ears with her hands*)

I will not hear you.

Diom. (*kneeling by her and drawing her hands away*)

But I

Will tell you of your bright sungod.

Andr. He is not

My sungod or he would have saved them.

Diom. He did.

Andr. (*leaping to her feet*)

Then tell me of him.

Diom. Suddenly there dawned

A man, a vision, a brightness, who descended
From where I know not, but to me it seemed
That the blue heavens just then created him
Out of the sunlight. His face and radiant body
Aspired to copy the Olympian Zeus
And wings were on his feet.

Andr. He was my sungod!

Diom. He caught two drowning wretches by the robe
And drew them safe to land.

Andr. He was my sungod.

Diomedes, I have seen him in my dream.

- Prax.* I think it was Poseidon come to take
His tithe of all that death for the ancient altar,
Lest all be engulfed by his grey billows, he
Go quite unhonoured.
- Diom.* Hang up your grim Poseidon!
This was a sweet and noble face all bright
With manly kindness.
- Andr.* Oh I know, I know.
Where went he with those rescued?
- Diom.* Why, just then
Prince Iolaus and his land leaped forth
And took them.
- Andr.* (*angrily*) Wherefore took them? By what right?
- Diom.* To die according to our Syrian law
On dark Poseidon's altar.
- Andr.* They shall not die.
It is a shame, a cruel cold injustice.
I wonder that my brother had any part in it!
My sungod saved them, they belong to him,
Not to your hateful gods. They are his and mine,
I will not let you kill them.
- Prax.* Why, they must die
And you will see it done, my little princess,
You shall! Where are you going?
- Andr.* Let me go.
I do not love you when you talk like this.
- Prax.* But you are Syria's lady and must appear
At these high ceremonies.
- Andr.* I had rather be
A beggar's daughter who devours the remnants
Rejected from your table, than reign a queen
Doing such cruelty.
- Prax.* Little passionate scold!
You mean not what you say. A beggar's daughter!

You? You who toss about if only a rose-leaf
Crinkle the creamy smoothness of your sheets,
And one harsh word flings weeping broken-hearted
As if the world had no more joy in store.
You are a little posturer, you make
A theatre of your own mind to act in,
Take parts, declaim such childish rhetoric
As that you speak now. You a beggar's daughter!
Come, listen what became of your bright sungod.
Diom. Him too they would have seized, but he, with steel
Opposed and tranquil smiling eyes appalled them.
Then Polydaon came and Phineus came
And bade arrest the brilliant god. Our Prince,
Seized by his glory, with his virgin point
Resisted their assault.

Andr.

My Iolaus!

Diom.

All suddenly the stranger's lifted shield
Became a storm of lightnings. Dawn was blinded:
Far promontories leaped out in the blaze,
The surges were illumined and the horizon
Answered with light.

Andr. (*clapping her hands*)

O glorious! O my dream!

Prax.

You tell the actions of a mighty god,
Diomedes.

Diom.

A god he seemed to us, Praxilla.
The soldiers ran in terror, Polydaon
Went snorting off like a black whale harpooned,
And even Phineus fled.

Andr.

Was he not killed?

I wish he had been killed.

Prax.

This is your pity!

Andr. (*angrily*)

I do not pity tigers, wolves and scorpions.
I pity men who are weak and beasts that suffer.

Prax. I thought you loved all men and living things.

Andr. Perhaps I would have loved him like my hound
Or the lion in the park who lets me pat his mane;
But since he would have me even without my will
To foul with his beast touch, my body abhors him.

Prax. Fie, fie! You speak too violently. How long
Will you be such a child?

Diom. Our Iolaus
And that bright stranger then embraced. Together
They left the beach.

Andr. Where, where is Iolaus?
Why is he long in coming? I must see him.
I have a thousand things to ask.

She runs out.

Diom. She is
A strange unusual child, my little playmate.

Prax. None can help loving her, she is in charm
Compelling: but her mind is wry and warped.
She is not natural, not sound in fancy,
But made of wild uncurbed imaginations,
With feelings as unruly as winds and waves
And morbid sympathies. At times she talks
Strange childish blasphemies that make me tremble.
She would impose her fancies on the world
As better than the eternal laws that rule us!
I wish her mother had brought her up more strictly.
For she will come to harm.

Diom. Oh, do not say it!
I have seen no child in all our Syria like her,
None her bright equal in beauty. She pleases me
Like days of sunlight rain when spring caresses
Warmly the air. Oh, here is Iolaus.

Prax. Is it he?

Diom. I know him by the noble strut
He has put on ever since they made him captain.

Andromeda comes running.

Andr. My brother comes! I saw him from the terrace.

Enters Iolaus. Andromeda runs and embraces him.

Oh, Iolaus, have you brought him to me?

Where is my sungod?

Iol. In heaven, little sister.

Andr. Oh, do not laugh at me. I want my sungod
Whose face is like the grand Olympian Zeus'
And wings are on his feet. Where did you leave him
After you took him from our rough sea-beaches?

Iol. What do you mean, Andromeda?

Diom. Some power
Divine sent her a dream of that bright strength
Which shone by you on the sea-beach today,
And him she calls her sungod.

Iol. Is it so?

My little wind-tossed rose Andromeda!
I shall be glad indeed if Heaven intends this.

Andr. Where is he?

Iol. Do you not know, little rose-sister,
The great gods visit earth by splendid moments
And then are lost to sight? Come, do not weep;
He is not lost to Syria.

Andr. Iolaus,
Why did you take the two poor foreign men
And give them to the priest? My sungod saved them,
Brother,—what right had you to kill?

Iol. My child,
I only did my duty as a soldier,
Yet grieve I was compelled.

Andr. Now will you save them?

Iol. But they belong to dread Poseidon now!

Andr. What will be done to them?

Iol. They must be bound
On the god's altar and their living hearts

Ripped from their blood-choked breasts to feed his
hunger.

Andromeda covers her face with her robe.

Grieve not for them: they but fulfil their fate.
These things are in the order of the world
Like plagues and slaughters, famines, fires and
earthquakes,
Which when they pass us by killing their thousands,
We should not weep for, but be grateful only
That other souls than the dear heads we loved
Have perished.

Andr. You will not save them?
Prax. Unhappy girl!

It is impiety to think of it.
Fie! Would you have your brother killed for your
whimsies?

Andr. Will you not save them, brother?
Iol. I cannot, child.
Andr. Then I will.

She goes out.

Iol. Does she mean it?
Prax. Such wild caprices
Are always darting through her brain.
Iol. I could not take
Poseidon's wrath upon my head!
Prax. Forget it

As she will too. Her strange imaginations
Flutter awhile among her golden curls,
But soon wing off with careless flight to Lethe.

Medes enters.

Iol. What is it, Medes?
Med. The King, Prince Iolaus,
Requires your presence in his audience-chamber.
Iol. So? Tell me, Medes, is Poseidon's priest
In presence there?

Med. He is and full of wrath.

Iol. Go, tell them I am coming.

Medes goes out.

Prax. Alas!

Iol. Fear not.

I have a strength the grim intriguers dream not of.
Let not my sister hear this, Diomede.

He goes.

Prax. What may not happen? The priest is dangerous,
Poseidon may be angry. Let us go
And guard our child from peril of this shock.

They go.

ACT II

SCENE 1

The audience-chamber in the Palace of Cepheus.

Cepheus and Cassiopea, seated.

- Cass.* What will you do, Cepheus?
Ceph. This that has happened
Is most unfortunate.
- Cass.* What will you do?
I hope you will not give up to the priest
My Iolaus' golden head? I hope
You do not mean that?
- Ceph.* Great Poseidon's priest
Sways all this land: for from the liberal blood
Moistening that high-piled altar grow our harvests
And strong Poseidon satisfied defends
Our frontiers from the loud Assyrian menace.
- Cass.* Empty thy treasures, glut him with gold.
Let us be beggars rather than one bright curl
Of Iolaus feel his gloomy mischiefs.
- Ceph.* I had already thought of it. Medes!
Medes enters.
Waits Polydaon yet?
- Med.* He does, my lord.
- Ceph.* Call him and Tyrian Phineus.
Medes goes out again.
- Cass.* Bid Tyre save
Andromeda's loved brother from this doom;
He shall not have our daughter otherwise.
- Ceph.* This too was in my mind already, queen.
Polydaon and Phineus enter.

Be seated, King of Tyre: priest Polydaon,
Possess thy usual chair.

Poly. Well, King of Syria,
Shall I have justice? Wilt thou be the King
Over a peopled country? or must I loose
The snake-haired Gorgon-eyed Erinnyes
To hunt thee with the clamorous whips of Hell
Blood-dripping?

Ceph. Be content. Cepheus gives nought
But justice from his mighty seat. Thou shalt
Have justice.

Poly. I am not used to cool my heels
About the doors of princes like some beggarly
And negligible suitor whose poor plaint
Is valued by some paltry drachmas. I am
Poseidon's priest.

Ceph. The prince is called to answer here
Thy charges.

Poly. Answer! Will he deny a crime
Done impudently in Syria's face? 'Tis well;
The Tyrian stands here who can meet that lie.

Cass. My children's lips were never stained with lies,
Insulting priest, nor will be now; from him
We shall have truth.

Ceph. And grant the charge admitted,
The ransom shall be measured with the crime.

Poly. What talk is this of ransom? Think'st thou, King,
That dire Poseidon's grim offended godhead
Can be o'erplastered with a smudge of silver?
Shall money blunt his vengeance? Shall his majesty
Be estimated in a usurer's balance?
Blood is the ransom of this sacrilege.

Cass. Ah God!

Ceph. (in agitation)

Take all my treasury includes

Of gold and silver, gems and porphyry
Unvalued.

Poly. The gods are not to be bribed,
King Cepheus.

Cass. (apart) Give him honours, state, precedence,
All he can ask. O husband, let me keep
My child's head on my bosom safe.

Ceph. Listen!
What wouldst thou have? Precedence, pomp and state?
Hundreds of spears to ring thee where thou walkest?
Swart slaves and beautiful women in thy temple
To serve thee and thy god? They are thine. In feasts
And high processions and proud regal meetings
Poseidon's followers shall precede the King.

Poly. Me wilt thou bribe? I take these for Poseidon,
Nor waive my chief demand.

Ceph. What will content thee?
Poly. A victim has been snatched from holy altar:
To fill that want a victim is demanded.

Ceph. I will make war on Egypt and Assyria
And throw thee kings for victims.

Poly. Thy vaunt is empty.
Poseidon being offended, who shall give thee
Victory o'er Egypt and o'er strong Assyria?

Ceph. Take thou the noblest head in all the kingdom
Below the Prince. Take many heads for one.

Poly. Shall then the innocent perish for the guilty?
Is this thy justice? How shall thy kingdom last?

Ceph. You hear him, Cassiopea? he will not yield,
He is inexorable.

Poly. Must I wait longer?

Ceph. Ho, Medes!

Medes enters.

Iolaus comes not yet.

Medes goes out.

Cass. (rising fiercely)

Priest, thou wilt have my child's blood then, it seems!
Nought less will satisfy thee than thy prince
For victim?

Poly. Poseidon knows not prince or beggar.

Whoever honours him, he heaps with state
And fortune. Whoever wakes his dreadful wrath,
He throws down into Erebus for ever.

Cass. Beware! Thou shalt not have my child. Take heed
Ere thou drive monarchs to extremity.
Thou hopest in thy sacerdotal pride
To make the Kings of Syria childless, end
A line that started from the gods. Think'st thou
It will be tamely suffered? What have we
To lose, if we lose this? I bid thee again
Take heed: drive not a queen to strong despair.
I am no tame-souled peasant, but a princess
And great Chaldea's child.

Poly. (after a pause)

Wilt thou confirm
Thy treasury and all the promised honours,
If I excuse the deed?

Ceph.

They shall be thine.

He turns to whisper with Cassiopea.

Phin. (apart to Polydaon)

Dost thou prefer me for thy foeman?

Poly.

See

In the queen's eyes her rage. We must discover
New means; this way's not safe.

Phin.

Thou art a coward, priest, for all thy violence.
But fear me first and then blench from a woman.

Poly.

Well, as you choose.

Iolaus enters.

Iol.

Father, you sent for me?

Ceph.

There is a charge upon thee, Iolaus,

- I do not yet believe. But answer truth
Like Cepheus' son, whatever the result.
- Iol.* Whatever I have done, my father, good
Or ill, I dare support against the world.
What is this accusation?
- Ceph.* Didst thou rescue
At dawn a victim from Poseidon's altar?
- Iol.* I did not.
- Poly.* Dar'st thou deny it, wretched boy?
Monarch, his coward lips have uttered falsehood.
Speak, King of Tyre.
- Iol.* Hear me speak first. Thou ruffian
Intriguer masking in a priest's disguise,—
- Poly.* Hear him, O King!
- Ceph.* Speak calmly. I forbid
All violence. Thou deniest then the charge?
- Iol.* As it was worded to me, I deny it.
- Phin.* Syria, I have not spoken till this moment,
And would not now, but sacred truth compels
My tongue howe'er reluctant. I was there,
And saw him rescue a wrecked mariner
With his rash steel. Would that I had not seen it!
- Iol.* Thou liest, Phineus, King of Tyre.
- Cass.* Alas!
If thou hast any pity for thy mother,
Run not upon thy death in this fierce spirit,
My child. Calmly repel the charge against thee,
Nor thus offend thy brother.
- Phin.* I am not angry.
- Iol.* It was no shipwrecked weeping mariner,
Condemned by the wild seas, whom they attempted,
But a calm god or glorious hero who came
By other ways than man's to Syria's margin.
Nor did rash steel or battle rescue him.

With the mere dreadful waving of his shield
He shook from him a hundred threatening lances,
This hero hot from Tyre and this proud priest
Now bold to bluster in his monarch's chamber,
But then a pallid coward,—so he trusts
In his Poseidon!

Poly. Hast thou done?

Iol. Not yet.

That I drew forth my sword, is true, and true
I would have rescued him from god or devil
Had it been needed.

Poly. Enough! he has confessed!

Give verdict, King, and sentence. Let me watch
Thy justice.

Ceph. But this fault was not so deadly!

Poly. I see thy drift, O King. Thou wouldst prefer
Thy son to him who rules the earth and waters:
Thou wouldst exalt thy throne above the temple,
Setting the gods beneath thy feet. Fool, fool,
Know'st thou not that the terrible Poseidon
Can end thy house in one tremendous hour?
Yield him one impious head which cannot live
And he will give thee other and better children.
Give sentence or be mad and perish.

Iol. Father,

Not for thy son's but for thy honour's sake
Resist him. 'Tis better to lose crown and life,
Than rule the world because a priest allows it.

Poly. Give sentence, King. I can no longer wait,
Give sentence.

Ceph. (*helplessly to Cassiopea*)

What shall I do?

Cass. Monarch of Tyre,

Thou choosest silence then, a pleased spectator?
Thou hast bethought thee of other nuptials?

- Phin.* *Lady,*
 You wrong my silence which was but your servant
 To find an issue from this dire impasse,
 Rescuing your child from wrath, justice not wounded.
- Cass.* The issue lies in the accuser's will,
 If putting malice by he'd only seek
 Poseidon's glory.
- Phin.* The deed's by all admitted,
 The law and bearing of it are in doubt.
 (*To Polydaon*)
 You urge a place is void and must be filled
 On great Poseidon's altar, and demand
 Justly the guilty head of Iolaus.
 He did the fault, his head must ransom it.
 Let him fill up the void, who made the void.
 Nor will high heaven accept a guiltless head,
 To let the impious free.
- Cass.* Phineus,—
- Phin.* But if
 The victim lost return, you cannot then
 Claim Iolaus: then there is no void
 For substitution.
- Poly.* King,—
- Phin.* The simpler fault
 With ransom can be easily excused
 And covered up in gold. Let him produce
 The fugitive.
- Iol.* Tyrian,—
- Phin.* I have not forgotten.
 Patience! You plead that your mysterious guest
 Being neither shipwrecked nor a mariner
 Comes not within the doom of law. Why then,
 Let Law decide that issue, not the sword
 Nor swift evasion! Dost thou fear the event

Of thy great father's sentence from that throne
Where Justice sits with bright unsullied robe
Judging the peoples? Calmly expect his doom
Which errs not.

Cass. Thou art a man noble indeed in counsel
And fit to rule the nations.

Ceph. I approve.
You laugh, my son?

Iol. I laugh to see wise men
Catching their feet in their own subtleties.
King Phineus, wilt thou seize Olympian Zeus
And call thy Tyrian smiths to forge his fetters?
Or wilt thou claim the archer bright Apollo
To meet thy human doom, priest Polydaon?
'Tis well; the danger's yours. Give me three days
And I'll produce him.

Ceph. Priest, art thou content?

Poly. Exceed not thou the period by one day,
Or tremble.

Ceph. (rising)

Happily decided. Rise
My Cassiopea: now our hearts can rest
From these alarms.

Cepheus and Cassiopea leave the chamber.

Iol. Keep thy knife sharp, sacrificant.
King Phineus, I am grateful and advise
Thy swift departure back to Tyre unmarried.

He goes out.

Poly. What hast thou done, King Phineus? All is ruined.

Phin. What, have the stripling's threats appalled thee, priest?

Poly. Thou hast demanded a bright dreadful god
For victim. We might have slain young Iolaus:
Wilt thou slay him whose tasselled ægis smote
Terror into a hundred warriors?

Phin.

Priest,

Thou art a superstitious fool. Believe not
The gods come down to earth with swords and wings,
Or transitory raiment made in looms,
Or bodies visible to mortal eyes.
Far otherwise they come, with unseen steps
And stroke invisible,—if gods indeed
There are. I doubt it, who can find no room
For powers unseen: the world's alive and moves
By natural law without their intervention.

Poly.

King Phineus, doubt not the immortal gods.
They love not doubters. If thou hadst lived as I,
Daily devoted to the temple dimness,
And seen the awful shapes that live in night,
And heard the awful sounds that move at will
When Ocean with the midnight is alone,
Thou wouldst not doubt. Remember the dread portents
High gods have sent on earth a hundred times
When kings offended.

Phin.

Well, let them reign unquestioned
Far from the earth in their too bright Olympus,
So that they come not down to meddle here
In what I purpose. For your ægis-bearer,
Your winged and two-legged lion, he's no god.
You hurried me away or I'd have probed
His godlike guts with a good yard of steel
To test the composition of his ichor.

Poly.

What of his flaming ægis lightning-tasselled?
What of his winged sandals, King?

Phin.

The ægis?

Some mechanism of refracted light.
The wings? Some new aerial contrivance
A luckier Dædalus may have invented.
The Greeks are scientists unequalled, bold
Experimenters, happy in invention.

Nothing's incredible that they devise,
And this man, Polydaon, is a Greek.

Poly. Have it your way. Say he was merely man!
How do we profit by his blood?

Phin. O marvellous!

Thou hesitate to kill! thou seek for reasons!
Is not blood always blood? I could not forfeit
My right to marry young Andromeda;
She is my claim to Syria. Leave something, priest,
To fortune, but be ready for her coming
And grasp ere she escape. The old way's best;
Excite the commons, woo their thunderer,
That plausible republican. Iolaus
Once ended, by right of fair Andromeda
I'll save and wear the crown. Priest, over Syria
And all my Tyrians thou shalt be the one prelate,
Should all go well.

Poly. All shall go well, King Phineus.

They go.

ACT III

SCENE 1

*The women's apartments of the Palace.
Andromeda, Diomedes.*

Andr. All's ready, let us go.

Diom. Andromeda,
My little mistress whom I love, let me
Beseech you by that love, do not attempt it.
Oh, this is no such pretty wilfulness
As all men love to smile at and to punish
With tenderness and chidings. It is a crime
Full of impiety, a deed of danger
That venturous and iron spirits would be aghast
To dream of. You think because you are a child,
You will be pardoned, because you are a princess
No hand will dare to punish you. You do not know
Men's hearts. They will not pause to pity you,
They will not spare. The people in its rage
Will tear us both to pieces, limb from limb,
With blows and fury, roaring round like tigers.
Will you expose yourself to that grim handling
Who cry out at the smallest touch of pain?

Andr. Do not delay me on the brink of action.

You have said these things before.

Diom. You shall not do it.
I will not go with you.

Andr. So you expose me
To danger merely and break the oath you swore;
For I must do it then unhelped.

Diom. I'll tell
Your mother, child, and then you cannot go.

Andr. I shall die then on the third day from this.

Diom. What! you will kill yourself, and for two strangers
You never saw? You are no human maiden
But something far outside mortality,
Princess, if you do this.

Andr. I shall not need.
You threaten me with the fierce people's tearings,
And shall I not be torn when I behold
My fellows' piteous hearts plucked from their bosoms
Between their anguished shrieks? I shall fall dead
With horror and with pity at your feet:
Then you'll repent this cruelty.

Diom. *She weeps.*
Child, child!
Hush, I will go with you. If I must die,
I'll die.

Andr. Have I not loved you, Diomede?
Have I not taken your stripes upon myself,
Claiming your dear offences? Have I not lain
Upon your breast, stealing from my own bed
At night, and kissed your bosom and your hands
For very love of you? And I had thought
You loved me: but you do not care at last
Whether I live or die.

Diom. Oh hush! I love you,
I'll go with you. You shall not die alone,
If you are bent on dying. I'll put on
My sandals and be with you in a moment.
Go, little princess. I am with you; go.

Andr. *She goes.*
O you poor shuddering men, my human fellows,
Horribly bound beneath the grisly knife
You feel already groping for your hearts,

Pardon me each long moment that you wrestle
 With grim anticipation. O, and you,
 If there is any god in the deaf skies
 That pities men or helps them, O protect me!
 But if you are inexorably unmoved
 And punish pity, I, Andromeda,
 Who am a woman on this earth, will help
 My brothers. Then, if you must punish me,
 Strike home. You should have given me no heart;
 It is too late now to forbid it feeling.

She is going out. Athene appears.

What is this light, this glory? who art thou,
 O beautiful marble face amid the lightnings?
 My heart faints with delight, my body trembles,
 Intolerable ecstasy beats in my veins;
 I am oppressed and tortured with thy beauty.

Ath. I am Athene.

Andr. Art thou a goddess? Thy name
 We hear far off in Syria.

Ath. I am she
 Who helps and has compassion on struggling mortals.

Andr. (falling prostrate)
 Do not deceive me! I will kiss thy feet.
 O joy! thou art! thou art!

Ath. Lift up thy head,
 My servant.

Andr. Thou art! there are not only void
 Azure and cold inexorable laws.

Ath. Stand up, O daughter of Cassiope.
 Wilt thou then help these men of Babylonia,
 My mortals whom I love?

Andr. I help myself,
 When I help these.

Ath. To thee alone I gave
 This knowledge. O virgin, O Andromeda,

It reached thee through that large and noble heart
Of woman beating in a little child.
But dost thou know that thy reward shall be
Betrayal and fierce hatred? God and man
Shall league in wrath to kill and torture thee
Mid dire revilings.

Andr. My reward shall be
To cool this anguish of pity in my heart

Ath. And be at peace: if dead, O still at peace!
Thou fear'st not then? They will expose thee, child,
To slaughter by the monsters of the deep
Who shall come forth to tear thy limbs.

Andr. Beyond too
Shall I be hated, in that other world?

Ath. Perhaps.

Andr. Wilt thou love me?

Ath. Thou art my child.

Andr. O mother, O Athene, let me go.
They linger in anticipated pangs.

Ath. Go, child. I shall be near invisibly.

She disappears.

*Andromeda stands with clasped hands straining her eyes as if
into infinity.*

Diomedes returns.

Diom. You are not gone as yet? what is this, princess?
What is this light around you! How you are altered,
Andromeda!

Andr. Diomedes, let us go.

They go out.

SCENE 2

In the Temple of Poseidon.

Cireas.

Cir. I am done with thee, Poseidon Ennosigaios, man-slayer, ship-breaker, earth-shaker, lord of the waters! Never was faithful service so dirtily rewarded. In all these years not a drachma, not an obolus, not even a false coin for solace. And when thou hadst mocked me with hope, when a Prince had promised me all my findings, puttest thou me off with two pauperized merchants of Babylon? What, thou takest thy loud ravenous glut of the treasures that should have been mine and roarest derision at me with thy hundred-voiced laughers? Am I a sponge to suck up these insults? No! I am only moderately porous. I will break thy treasury, Poseidon, and I will run. Think not either to send thy sea-griffins after me. For I will live on the top of Lebanon, and thy monsters, when they come for me, shall snort and grin and gasp for breath and return to thee baffled and asthmatic.

As he talks Iolaus and Perseus enter.

Iol. What, Cireas, wilt thou run? I'll give thee gold
To wing thy shoes, if thou wilt do my bidding.

Cir. I am overheard! I am undone! I am crucified! I
am disembowelled!

Iol. Be tranquil, Cireas, fool, I come to help thee.

Cir. Do you indeed! I see, they have made you a god, for you know men's minds. But could old father Zeus find your newborn godhead no better work than to help thieves and give wings to runaways? Will you indeed help me,

god Iolaus? I can steal then under thy welcome protection? I can borrow Poseidon's savings and run?

Iol. Steal not: thou shalt have gold enough to buy
Thy liberty and farms and slaves and cattle.

Cir. Prince, art thou under a vow of liberality? or being about to die, wilt thou distribute thy goods and chattels to deserving dishonesty? Do not mock me, for if thou raise hopes again in me and break them, I can only hang myself.

Iol. I mock thee not, thou shalt have glut of riches.

Cir. What must I do? I'd give thee nose and ears
For farms and freedom.

Pers. Wherefore dost thou bribe
This slave to undo a bond my sword unties?

Iol. I shrink from violence in the grim god's temple.

Cir. Zeus, art thou there with thy feathers and phosphorus? I pray thee, my good bright darling Zeus, do not come in the way of my earnings. Do not be so cantankerously virtuous, do not be so damnably economical. Good Zeus, I adjure thee by thy foot-plumes.

Iol. Cireas, wilt thou bring forth the wretched captives
Who wait the butcher Polydaon's knife
With groanings? we would talk with them. Wilt thou?

Cir. Will I? Will I? I would do any bad turn to that scanty-hearted rampageous old ship-swallower there. I would do it for nothing, and for so much gold will I not?

Iol. And thou must shut thine eyes.

Cir. Eyes! I will shut mouth and nose and ears too,
nor ask for one penny extra.

Iol. Dost thou not fear?

Cir. Oh, the blue-haired old bogy there? I have lived eighteen years in this temple and seen nothing of him but ivory and sapphires. I begin to think he cannot breathe out of water; no doubt, he is some kind of fish and walks on the point of his tail.

Pers. Enough, bring forth the Babylonian captives.

Cir. I run, Zeus, I run: but keep thy phosphorus lit and handy against Polydaon's return unasked for and untrumpeted.

He runs out.

Pers. O thou grim calmness imaged like a man
That frown'st above the altar! dire Poseidon!
Art thou that god indeed who smooths the sea
With one finger, and when it is thy will,
Rufflest the oceans with thy casual breathing?
Art thou not rather, lord, some murderous
And red imagination of this people,
The shadow of a soul that dreamed of blood
And took this dimness? If thou art Poseidon,
The son of Cronos, I am Cronos' grandchild,
Perseus, and in my soul Athene moves
With lightnings.

Iol. I hear the sound of dragging chains.

Cireas returns with Tyrnaus and Smerdas.

Pers. Smerdas and thou, Tyrnaus, once again
We meet.

Smer. Save me, yet save me.

Pers. If thou art worth it,
I may.

Smer. Thou shalt have gold. I am well worth it.
I'll empty Babylonia of its riches
Into thy wallet.

Pers. Has terror made thee mad?
Refrain from speech! Thine eyes are calm, Tyrnaus.

Tyr. I have composed my soul to my sad fortunes.
Yet wherefore sad? Fate has dealt largely with me.
I have been thrice shipwrecked, twice misled in deserts,
Wounded six times in battle with wild men
For life and treasure. I have outspent kings:
I have lost fortunes and amassed them: princes

Have been my debtors, kingdoms lost and won
By lack or having of a petty fraction
Of my rich incomings: and now Fate gives me
This tragic, not inglorious death: I am
The banquet of a god. It fits, it fits,
And I repine not.

Pers. But will these help, Tyrnaus,
To pass the chill eternity of Hades?
This memory of glorious breathing life,
Will it alleviate the endless silence?

Tyr. But there are lives beyond, and we meanwhile
Move delicately amid aerial things
Until the green earth wants us.

Pers. (*shearing his chains with a touch of his sword*)
Yet awhile
Of the green earth take all thy frank desire,
Merchant: the sunlight would be loth to lose thee.

Smer. O radiant helpful youth! O son of splendour!
I live again.

Pers. Thou livest, but in chains,
Smerdas.

Smer. But thy good sword will quickly shear them.

Pers. Thou wilt give me all Babylonia holds
Of riches for reward?

Smer. More, more, much more!

Pers. But thou must go to Babylon to fetch it.
Then what security have I of payment?

Smer. Keep good Tyrnaus here, my almost brother.
I will come back and give thee gold, much gold.

Pers. You'd leave him here? in danger? with the knife
Searching for him and grim Poseidon angry?

Smer. What danger, when he is with thee, O youth,
Strong radiant youth?

Pers. Yourself then stay with me,
And he shall bring the ransom from Chaldea.

Smer. Here? here? Oh God! they'll seize me yet again
And cut my heart out. Let me go, dear youth,
Oh, let me go; I'll give thee double gold.

Pers. Thou sordid treacherous thing of fears, I'll not
Venture for such small gain as the poor soul
Thou holdest, nor drive with danger losing bargains.

Smer. Oh, do not jest! it is not good to jest
With death and horror.

Pers. I jest not.

Smer. Oh God! thou dost.

Diom. (without)

Cireas!

Cir. (jumping)

Who? who? who?

Iol. Is't not a woman's voice?

Withdraw into the shadow: let our swords
Be out against surprise. Hither, Tyrnaus.

Diom. Cireas! where are you, Cireas? it is I.

Cir. It is the little palace scamp, Diomedes.
Plague take her! How she fluttered the heart in me!

Iol. Say nothing of us, merchant, or thou diest.

*Iolaus, Perseus and Tyrnaus withdraw into the dimness of
the Temple. Andromeda and Diomedes enter.*

Cir. Princess Andromeda!

Pers. (apart)

Andromeda!

Iolaus' rosy sister! O child goddess
Dropped recently from heaven! Its light is still
Upon thy face, thou marvel!

Iol. My little sister

In these grim precincts, who so feared their shadows!

Andr. Cireas, my servant Diomedes means

To tell you of some bargain. Will you walk yonder?

Cireas and Diomedes walk apart talking.
Art thou, as these chains say, the mournful victim

Our savage billows spared and men would murder?
But was there not another? Have they brought thee
From thy sad prison to the shrine alone?

Smer. He,—he,—

Andr. Has terror so possessed thy tongue,
It cannot do its office? Oh, be comforted.
Although red horror has its grasp on thee,
I dare to tell thee there is hope.

Smer. What hope?

Ah heaven! what hope! I feel the knife even now
Hacking my bosom. If thou bring'st me hope,
I'll know thee for a goddess and adore thee.

Andr. Be comforted: I bring thee more than hope,
Cireas!

Cir. You'll give me chains? you'll give me jewels?

Andr. All of my own that I can steal for you.

Cir. Steal boldly, O honey-sweet image of a thief, steal
and fear not. I rose for good luck after all this excellent
morning! O Poseidon, had I known there was more to be
pocketed in thy disservice than in thy service, would I have
misspent these eighteen barren years?

Andr. Undo this miserable captive's bonds.

Smer. What! I shall be allowed to live! Is't true?

Andr. No, I'll undo them, Cireas; I shall feel
I freed him. Is there so much then to unlink?
O ingenuity of men to hurt
And bind and slay their brothers!

Smer. 'Tis not a dream,

The horror was the dream. She smiles on me
A wonderful glad smile of joy and kindness,
Making a sunshine. Oh, be quicker, quicker.
Let me escape this hell where I have eaten
And drunk of terror and have slept with death.

Andr. Are you so careless of the friend who shared
The tears and danger? Where is he? Cireas!

Tyr. (coming forward)

O thou young goddess with the smile! Behold him,
Tyrnaus the Chaldean.

Andr. (dropping the chain which binds Smerdas)

Already free!

Who has forestalled me?

Tyr.

Maiden, art thou vexed

To see me unbound?

Andr.

I grudge your rescuer the happy task
Heaven meant for me of loosening your chains.
It would have been such joy to feel the cold
Hard irons drop apart between my fingers!
Who freed you?

Tyr.

A god as radiant as thyself,
Thou merciful sweetness.

Andr.

Had he not a look
Like the Olympian's? Was he not bright like Hermes
Or Phœbus?

Tyr.

He was indeed. Thou know'st him then?

Andr.

In dreams I have met him. He was here but now?

Tyr.

He has withdrawn into the shadow, virgin.

Smer.

Why do you leave me bound, and talk, and talk,
As if Death had not still his fingers on me?

Andr. (resuming her task)

Forgive me! Tyrnaus, did that radiant helper
Who clove thy chains, forget to help this poor
Pale trembling man?

Tyr.

Because he showed too much
The sordid fear that pities only itself,
He left him to his fate.

Andr.

Alas, poor human man!
Why, we have all so many sins to answer,
It would be hard to have cold justice dealt us.
We should be kindly to each other's faults
Remembering our own. Is't not enough

To see a face in tears and heal the sorrow,
Or must we weigh whether the face is fair
Or ugly? I think that even a snake in pain
Would tempt me to its succour, though I knew
That afterwards 'twould bite me! But he is a god
Perhaps who did this and his spotless radiance
Abhors the tarnish of our frailer natures.

Smer. Oh, I am free! I fall and kiss thy robe,
O goddess, O deliverer.

Andr. You must
Go quickly from this place. There is a cave
Near to those unkind rocks where you were shipwrecked,
A stone-throw up the cliff. We found it there
Climbing and playing, reckless of our limbs
In the sweet joy of sunshine, breeze and movement,
When we were children, I and Diomedes.
None else will dream of it. There have I stored
Enough of food and water. Closely lurk
Behind its curtains of fantastic stone:
Venture not forth, though your hearts pine for sunlight,
Or Death may take you back into his grip.
When hot pursuit and search have been tired out,
I'll find you golden wings will carry you
To your Chaldea.

Smer. Can you not find out divers
Who'll rescue our merchandise from the sunk rocks
Where it is prisoned?

Tyr. You have escaped grim murder,
Yet dream of nothing but your paltry gems!
You will call back Heaven's anger on our heads.

Smer. We cannot beg our way to far Chaldea.

Andr. Diving is dangerous there: I will not risk
Men's lives for money. I promised Cereas what I have,
And yet you shall not go unfurnished home.
I'll beg a sum from my brother Iolaus
Will help you to Chaldea.

Smer.

O my dear riches!

Must you lie whelmed beneath the Syrian surge
Uncared for?

Andr. (to Diomedes)

Take them to the cave. Show Cireas
The hidden mouth. I'll loiter and expect you
Under the hill-side, where sweet water plashes
From the grey fountain's head, our fountain. Mer-
chants, go;

Athene guard you!

Tyr.

Not before I kneel

And touch thy feet with reverent humble hands,
O human merciful divinity,
Who by thy own sweet spirit moved, unasked,
Not knowing us, cam'st from thy safe warm chamber
Here where Death broods grim-visaged in his home,
To save two unseen, unloved, alien strangers,
And being a woman feared not urgent death,
And being a child shook not before God's darkness
And that insistent horror of a world
O'ershadowing ours. O surely in these regions
Where thou wert born, pure-eyed Andromeda,
There shall be some divine epiphany
Of calm sweet-hearted pity for the world,
And harsher gods shall fade into their Hades.

Smer.

You prattle, and at any moment, comes
The dreadful priest with clutch upon my shoulder.
Come! come! you, slave-girl, lead the way, accursèd!
You loiter?

Andr.

Chide not my servant, Babylonian.

Go, Diomedes; darkness like a lid
Will soon shut down upon the rugged beach
And they may stumble as they walk. Go, Cireas.

Diomedes and Cireas go out, followed by the merchants.

Alone I stand before thee, grim Poseidon,

Here in thy darkness, with thy altar near
That keeps fierce memory of tortured groans
And human shrieks of victims, and, unforced,
I yet pollute my soul with thy bloody nearness
To tell thee that I hate, contemn, defy thee.
I am no more than a brief living woman,
Yet am I more divine than thou, for I
Can pity. I have torn thy destined prey
From thy red jaws. They say thou dost avenge
Fearfully insult. Avenge thyself, Poseidon.

She goes out: Perseus and Iolaus come forward.

Pers. Thou art the mate for me, Andromeda!
Now, now I know wherefore my eager sandals
Bore me resistlessly to thee and Syria.

Iol. This was Andromeda and not Andromeda,
I never saw her woman till this hour.

Pers. Knew you so ill the child you loved so well,
Iolaus?

Iol. Sometimes we know them least
Whom most we love and constantly consort with.

Pers. How daintily she moved as if a hand
She loved were on her curls and she afraid
Of startling the sweet guest!

Iol. O Perseus, Perseus!

She has defied a strong and dreadful god,
And dreadfully he will avenge himself.

Pers. Iolaus, friend, I think not quite at random
Athene led me to these happy shores
That bore such beautiful twin heads for me
Sun-curled, Andromeda and Iolaus,
That I might see their beauty marred with death
By cunning priests and blood-stained gods. Fear not
The event. I bear Athene's sword of sharpness.

They go out.

SCENE 3

Darkness. The Temple of Poseidon.

Polydaon enters.

Poly. Cireas! Why, Cireas! Cireas! Knave, I call you!
Is the rogue drunk or sleeps? Cireas! you, Cireas!
My voice comes echoing from the hollow shrine
To tell me of solitude. Where is this drunkard?
A dreadful thing it is to stand alone
In this weird temple. Forty years of use
Have not accustomed me to its mute threatening.
It seems to me as if dead victims moved
With awful faces all about this stone
Invisibly here palpable. And Ocean
Groans ever like a wounded god aloud
Against our rocky base, his voice at night
Weirdly insistent. I will go and talk
With the Chaldeans in their chains: better
Their pleasing groans and curses than the hush.
He goes out and after awhile comes back, disordered.
Wake, sleeping Syria, wake. Thou art violated,
Thy heart cut out: thou art outraged Syria, outraged,
Thy harvests and thy safety and thy sons
Already murdered! O hideous sacrilege!
Who can have dared this crime? Could the slave Cireas
Have ventured thus? O, no, it is the proud
God-hating son of Cepheus, Iolaus,
And that swift stranger borne through impious air
To upheave the bases of our old religion.
They have rescued the Chaldeans. Cireas lies
Murdered perhaps on the sound-haunted cliffs

Who would have checked their crime. I'll strike the gong
That only tolls when dread calamity
Strides upon Syria. Wake, doomed people, wake.
*He rushes out. A gong sounds for some moments. It is silent
and he returns, still more disordered.*

Wake! Wake! Do you not hear Poseidon raging
Beneath the cliffs with tiger-throated menace?
Do you not hear his feet upon the boulders
Sounding, a thunderous report of peril,
As he comes roaring up his stony ramparts
To slay you? Ah, the city wakes. I hear
A surge confused of hurrying, cries and tumult.
What is this darkness moving on me? Gods!
Where is the image? Whose is this awful godhead?
*The shadow of Poseidon appears, vague
and alarming at first, then distinct and terrible in the
darkness.*

Pos. My victims, Polydaon, give me my victims.

Poly. *(falling prostrate)*

It was not I, it was not I, but others.

Pos. My victims, Polydaon, give me my victims.

Poly. O dire offended god, not upon me
Fall thy loud scourges! I am innocent.

Pos. How art thou innocent, when the Chaldeans
Escape? Give me my victims, Polydaon.

Poly. I know not how they fled nor who released them.
Gnash not thy blood-stained teeth on me, O Lord,
Nor slay me with those glaring eyes. Thy voice
Thunders, a hollow terror, through my soul.

Pos. Hear me, unworthy priest. While thou art scheming
For thy own petty mortal aims abroad,
I am insulted in my temple, laughed at
By slaves, by children done injurious wrong,
My victims snatched from underneath my roof
By any casual hand, my dreadful image

Looking deserted on: for none avenges.
Poly. Declare thy will, O Lord, it shall be done.
Pos. Therefore I will awake, I will arise,
 And you shall know me for a god. This day
 The loud Assyrians shall break shouting in
 With angry hooves like a huge-riding flood
 Upon this country. The pleasant land of Syria
 Shall be dispeopled. Wolves shall howl in Damascus,
 And Gaza and Euphrates bound a desert.
 My resonant and cliff-o'ervaulting seas,
 Black-cowled, with foaming tops thundering shall climb
 Into your lofty seats of ease and wash them
 Strangled into the valleys. From the deep
 My ravening herds pastured by Amphitrite
 Shall walk upon your roads, devour your maidens
 And infants, tear your strong and armed men
 Helplessly shrieking like weak-wristed women,
 Till all are dead. And thou, neglectful priest,
 Shalt go down living into Tartarus
 Where knives fire-pointed shall disclose thy breast
 And pluck thy still-renewing heart from thee
 For ever till the world cease shall be thy torments.
Poly. O dreadful Lord!

Pos. If thou wouldst shun the doom,
 And keep my Syria safe, discover then
 The rescuer of the Babylonian captives
 And to the monsters of my deep expose
 For a delicious banquet. Offer the heart
 Of Iolaus here still warmly alive
 And sobbing blood to leave his beautiful body;
 • Slaughter on his yet not inanimate bosom,
 The hero for whose love he braved my rage,
 And let the sacrilegious house of Cepheus
 Be blotted from the light. Thy sordid aims
 Put from thy heart: remember to be fearless.

I will inhabit thee, if thou deserve it.

He disappears thundering.

Poly. Yes, Lord! shall not thy dreadful will be done?

Phineus enters and his Tyrians with torches.

Phin. Wherefore has the gong's ominous voice to-night
Affrighted Syria? Are you Polydaon
Who crouch here?

Poly. (*rising*)

Welcome, King Phineus.

Phin. Who art thou?

Thine eyes roll round in a bright glaring horror
And rising up thou shak'st thy gloomy locks
As if they were a hungry lion's mane
Preparing for the leap. Speak, Polydaon.

Poly. Yes, I shall speak, of sacrilege and blood.
Its terrible forfeit, and the wrath of Heaven.

*Cepheus enters with Dercetes and
Syrian soldiers, Therops, Perissus and a throng of Syrians;
scores of torches.*

Ceph. What swift calamity, O Polydaon,
Has waked to clamorousness the fatal gong
At which all Syria trembles? What is this face
Thou showest like some grim accusing phantom's
In the torches' light? Wherefore rang'st thou the bell?

Poly. It rang the doom of thee and all thy house,
Cepheus.

Ceph. My doom!

Phin. (*aside*)

I glimpse a striking plot
And 'tis well-staged too.

Poly. The victims are released,
The victims bound for terrible Poseidon.
Thou and thy blood are guilty.

Ceph. Thou art mad!

Poly. 'Tis thou and thy doomed race are seized with madness
Who with light hearts offend against Poseidon.
But they shall perish. Thou and thy blood shall perish.
Ceph. O, thou appal'st me. Wherefore rings out thy voice
Against me like a clamorous bell of doom
In the huge darkness?

Poly. Poseidon's self arose
In the dim night before me with a voice
As angry as the loud importunate surge
Denouncing thee. Thou and thy blood shall perish.

Phin. Cepheus, let search be made. Perhaps the victims
Have not fled far, and all may yet be saved.

Ceph. Scour, captain, scour all Syria for the fugitives.
Dercetes and thy troop, down to the coast,
Scan every boulder: out, out, Meriones,
Callias, Oridamas and Pericarpus,
Ring in the country-side with cordons armed,
Enter each house, ransack most private chambers,
But find them.

*Dercetes and the captains go out with
their soldiers, the people making way for them.*

Poly. People of Syria, hearken, hearken!
Poseidon for this sacrilege arouses
The Assyrian from the land and from the sea
His waves and all their sharp-toothed monsters: your
men
Shall be rent and disembowelled, your women ravished,
Butchered by foemen or by Ocean's dogs
Horribly eaten: what's left, the flood shall swallow.

Cries and groans.

Voices Spare us, Poseidon, spare us, dread deity!

Poly. Would you be spared? Obey Poseidon, people.

Ther. Thou art our King, command us.

Poly. Bring the woman,
Chaldean Cassiopea and her daughter.

Tell them that Syria's King commands them here.

Therops and others go out to do his bidding.

Phin. What mean you, priest?

Ceph. Wherefore my queen and princess?

Poly. I do the will of terrible Poseidon.

Thou and thy blood shall perish.

Phin. Thou then art mad!

I thought this was a skilful play. Think'st thou

I will permit the young Andromeda,

My bride, to be mishandled or exposed

To the bloody chances of wild popular fury

In such a moment?

Poly. Phineus, I know not what thou wilt permit:

I know what terrible Poseidon wills.

Phin. Poseidon! thou gross superstitious fool,

Hast thou seen shadows in the night and took'st them

For angry gods?

Poly. Refrain from impious words,

Or else the doom shall take thee in its net.

Phin. Refrain thyself from impious deeds, or else

A hundred Tyrian blades shall search thy brain

To look for thy lost reason.

Poly. (recoiling)

Patience, King Phineus!

It may be, thou shalt have thy whole desire

By other means.

Dercetes returns.

Derc. One of the fugitives is seized.

Poly. Where, where?

Derc. Creeping about the sea-kissed rocks we found him

Where the ship foundered, babbling greedily

Of his lost wealth, in cover of the darkness.

Poly. Now we shall know the impious hand. Tremble,

Tremble, King Cepheus.

Ceph. (aside)

I am besieged, undone.
No doubt it is my rash-brained Iolaus
Ruins us all.

Soldiers enter, driving in Smerdas.

Smer. (groaning)

I am dragged back to hell.
I am lost and nothing now can save me.

Poly.

Chaldean,
The choice is thine. Say, wilt thou save thy life
And see the green fields of thy land once more
And kiss thy wife and children?

Smer.

You mock me, mock me!

Poly.

No, man! thou shalt have freedom at a price
Or torture gratis.

Smer.

Price? price? I'll give the price.

Poly.

The names of those whose impious hands released thee:
Which if thou speak not, thou shalt die, not given
To the dire god, for he asks other victims,
But crushed with fearful tortures.

Smer.

O kind Heaven!
Have mercy! Must I give her up,—that smile
Of sweetness and those kindly eyes, to death?
It is a dreadful choice! I cannot do it.

Poly.

It was a woman did this!

Smer.

I will say no more.

Ceph.

I breathe again: it was not Iolaus.

Poly.

Seize him and twist him into anguished knots!
Let every bone be crushed and every sinew
Wrenched and distorted, till each inch of flesh
Gives out its separate shriek.

Smer.

O spare me, spare me:
I will tell all.

Poly.

Speak truth and I will give thee
Bushels of gold and shipment to Chaldea.

Smer.

Gold? Gold? Shall I have gold?

Poly.

Thou shalt.

Smer. (after a pause)

The youth

You would have taken on the beach, arrived,
And his the sword bit through my iron fetters.

Poly. Palter not! Who was with him? Thou shalt have gold.

Smer. Young Iolaus.

Ceph. Alas!

Phin. Thus far is well.

Poly. Thou hast a shifty look about the eyes.

Thou spokest of a woman. Was't the Queen?

Hast thou told all? His face grows pale. To torment!

Smer. (groaning)

I will tell all. Swear then I shall have gold
And safety.

Poly. By grim Poseidon's head I swear.

Smer. O hard necessity! The fair child princess,
Andromeda, with her young slave-girl came,
She was my rescuer.

There is a deep silence of amazement.

Phin. I'll not believe this! could that gentle child
Devise and execute so huge a daring?

Thou liest: thou art part of some foul plot.

Poly. He has the accent of unwilling truth.

Phineus, she is death's bride, not thine. Wilt thou
Be best man in that dolorous wedding? Forbear
And wait Poseidon's will.

Phin. (low)

Shall I have Syria?

Poly. When it is mine to give thee.

Therops returns.

Ther. The Queen arrives.

Poly. Remove the merchant.

*The soldiers take Smerdas into the
background, Cassiopea enters with Andromeda and Diomedes,
Nebassar and the Chaldean guard.*

- Cass.* Keep ready hands upon your swords, Chaldeans.
What is this tumult? Wherefore are we called
At this dim hour and to this solemn place?
- Poly.* Com'st thou with foreign falchions, Cassiopea,
To brave the Syrian gods? Abandon her,
Chaldeans. 'Tis a doomed head your swords encompass.
- Cass.* Since when dost thou give thy commands in Syria
And sentence queens? My husband and thy King
Stands near thee; let him speak.
- Poly.* Let him. There stands he.
- Cass.* Why hidest thou thine eyes, monarch of Syria,
Sinking thy forehead like a common man
Unkingly? What grief o'ertakes thee?
- Poly.* You see he speaks not.
'Tis I command in Syria. Is't not so,
My people?
- Ther.* 'Tis so.
- Poly.* Stand forth, Andromeda.
- Cass.* What would you with my child? I stand here for her.
- Poly.* She is accused of impious sacrilege,
And she must die.
- Cass.* (*shuddering*) Die! Who accuses her?
- Poly.* Bring the Chaldean.
- Diom.* Oh, the merchant's seized
And all is known. Deny it, my sweet lady,
And we may yet be saved.
- Andr.* Oh poor, poor merchant!
Did I unloose thy bonds in vain?
- Diom.* Say nothing.
- Andr.* And why should I conceal it, Diomede?
What I had courage in my heart to do,
Surely I can have courage to avow.
- Diom.* But they will kill us both.

- Andr.* I am a princess.
Why should I lie? From fear? But I am not afraid.
*Meanwhile the soldiers have brought
Smerdas to the front.*
- Poly.* Look, merchant. Say before all who rescued thee?
She was it?
- Smer.* It is she. Oh, do not look
With that sad smile upon me. I am compelled.
- Poly.* Is this the slave-girl?
- Smer.* It is she.
- Cass.* This wretch
Lies at thy bidding. Put him to the question.
- Poly.* I'll not permit it.
- Per.* Why man, it is the law. We'll not believe
Our little princess did the crime.
- Cass.* Syrians!
Look at the paltering priest. Do you not see
It is a plot, this man his instrument
Who lies so wildly? He'll not have him questioned.
No doubt 'twas he himself released the man,—
Who else could do it in this solemn temple
Where human footsteps fear to tread? He uses
The name of great Poseidon to conceal
His plottings. He would end the line of Cepheus
And reign in Syria.
- Per.* This sounds probable.
- Voices* Does he misuse Poseidon's name? unbind
Victims? Kill him!
- Cass.* Look how he pales, O people!
Is't thus that great Poseidon's herald looks
When charged with the god's fearful menaces?
He diets you with forgeries and fictions.
- Cries* Let him be strangled!
- Phin.* This is a royal woman.
- Poly.* Well, let the merchant then be put to question.

- Per.* Come and be tickled, merchant. I am the butcher.
Do you see my cleaver? I will torture you kindly.
- Smer.* O help me, save me, lady Andromeda.
- Andr.* Oh, do not lay your cruel hands upon him.
I did release him.
- Cass.* Ah, child Andromeda.
- Per.* You, little princess! Wherefore did you this?
- Andr.* Because I would not have their human hearts
Mercilessly uprooted for the bloody
Monster you worship as a god! because
I am capable of pain and so can feel
The pain of others! For which if you I love
Must kill me, do it. I alone am guilty.
- Poly.* Now, Cassiopea! You are silent, Queen.
Lo, Syrians, lo, my forgeries and fictions!
Lo, my vile plottings! Enough. Poseidon wills
That on the beach this criminal be bound
For monsters of the sea to rend in fragments,
And all the royal ancient blood of Syria
Must be poured richly forth to appease and cleanse.
- Cass.* Swords from the scabbard! gyre in your King from
harm,
Chaldeans! Hew your way through all opposers!
Thou in my arms, my child Andromeda!
I'll keep my daughter safe upon my bosom
Against the world.
- Poly.* What dost thou, Babylonian?
- Cass.* To the palace,
My trusty countrymen!
- Poly.* Oppose them, soldiers!
They cheat the god of the crime-burdened heads
Doomed by his just resentment.
- Derc.* We are few:
And how shall we lay hands on royalty?
- Poly.* Nebassar, darest thou oppose the gods?

Neb. Out of my sword's way, priest! I do my duty.

Poly. Draw, King of Tyre!

Phin. 'Tis not my quarrel, priest.

*Nebassar and the Chaldeans with drawn swords
go out from the Temple, taking the King and Queen,
Andromeda and Diomedes.*

Poly. People of Syria, you have let them pass!
You fear not then the anger of Poseidon?

Per. Would you have us spitted upon the Chaldean
swords? Mad priest, must we be broached like joints and
tossed like pancakes? We have no weapons. To-morrow
we will go to the Palace and what must be done shall be
done. But 'tis not just that many should be slain for the
crime of one and the house of Syria outrooted. Follow me
and observe my commands, brave aristocracy of the shop,
gallant commoners of the lathe and anvil, follow Perissus.
I will lead you to-night to your soft downy beds and to-
morrow to the Palace.

All the Syrians go out led by Therops and Perissus.

Phin. Thou hast done foolishly in this, O priest.
Hadst thou demanded the one needful head
Of Iolaus, it was easy: but now
The tender beauty of Andromeda
Compels remorse and the astonished people
Recoil from the bold waste of royal blood
Thou appointest them to spill. I see that zeal
And frantic superstition are bad plotters.
Henceforth I work for my sole hand, to pluck
My own good from the storms of civic trouble
This night prepares.

He goes out with his Tyrians.

Poly. O terrible Poseidon,
Thyself avenge thyself! hurl on this people
The sea and the Assyrian. Where is the power

Thou said'st should tarry with me? I have failed.
*He remains sunk in thought for awhile,
then raises his head.*
To-morrow, Syrian? to-morrow is Poseidon's.

ACT IV

SCENE 1

The country-side, high ground near the city of Cepheus.

*A crowd of Syrians, men and women,
running in terror, among them Chabrias, Megas, Baltis,
Pasithea, Morus, Gardas, Syrax.*

Balt. (stopping and sinking down on her knees)

Ah, whither can we run where the offended
Poseidon shall not reach us.

Chab.

Stop, countrymen;

Let's all die here together.

Others

Let's stop and die.

Meg.

Run, run! Poseidon's monsters howl behind.

Pas.

O day of horror and of punishment!

Syr.

Let us stay here; it is high ground, perhaps
The monster will not reach us.

Damoetes enters.

Dam.

I have seen the terror near, and yet I live.
It vomits fire for half a league.

Syr.

It is

As long as a sea-jutting promontory.

Dam.

It has six monstrous legs.

Syr.

Eight, eight; I saw it.

Meg.

Chabrias, it caught thy strong son by the foot,
And dashed his head against a stone, that all
The brains were scattered.

Chab.

Alas, my son! I will

Go back and join you in the monster's jaws.

He is stopped by the others.

Dam. It seized thy daughter, O Pasithea,
And tore her limbs apart, which it devoured
While yet the trunk lay screaming under its foot.

Pas. Oh God!

She swoons.

All Lift her up, lift her up. Alas!

Meg. These sorrows may be ours.

Balt. Ah Heaven, my son!

I did not wake him when this news of horror
Plucked me from sleep.

Gard. My wife and little daughter
Are in my cottage where perhaps the monster
Vomits his fiery breath against the door.
I will go back.

Mor. Let us go back, Damoetes.

Dam. I'll not go back for twenty thousand wives
And children. Life is sweet.

Many voices

Let us not go.

They stop Gardas.

Meg. What noise is that?

Balt. Run, run, 'tis some new horror.

All are beginning to run. Therops enters.

Ther. Where will you run? Poseidon's wrath is near you
And over you and behind you and before you.
His monsters from the ooze ravage howling
Along our shores, and the indignant sea
Swelled to unnatural tumultuous mountains
Is climbing up the cliffs with spume and turmoil.

Dam. O let us run a hundred leagues and live.

Ther. Before you is another death. Last night
The Assyrians at three points came breaking in
Across the border and the frontier forces
Are slain. They torture, burn and violate:
Young girls and matrons, men and boys are butchered.

Salvation is not in your front and flight
Casts you from angry gods to men more ruthless.
I wonder not that you are silent, stunned
With fear: but will you listen, countrymen,
And I will show you a cure for these fierce evils.

Voices Oh tell us, tell us, you shall be our king.

Meg. We'll set thy image by the great Poseidon's
And worship it.

Ther. What is the unexampled cause of wrath
Which whelms you with these horrors? Is't not the bold
Presumptuous line of Cepheus? Is't not your kings
Whose pride, swollen by your love and homage, Syrians,
Insults the gods, rescues Poseidon's victims
And with a sacrilegious levity
Exposes all your lives to death and woe?
There is the fount of all your misery, Syrians,
For this the horror eats you up,—your kings.

Cries Away with them! throw them into the sea—let
Poseidon swallow them!

Ther. But most I blame the fell Chaldean woman
Who rules you. What is this Cepheus but a puppet
Dressed up in royal seemings, pushed forth and danced
At her caprice? Unhappy is the land
That women rule, that country more unhappy
That is to heartless foreigners a prey.
But thou, O ill-starred Syria, two worst evils
Hast harboured in a single wickedness.
What cares the light Chaldean for your gods,
Your lives, your sons, your daughters? She lives at ease
Upon the revenues of your hard toil,
Depending on favourites, yes, on paramours,—
For why have women favourites but to ease
Their sensual longings?—and insults your deities.
Do you not think she rescued the Chaldeans
Because they were her countrymen, and used

Her daughter, young Andromeda, for too!
That her fair childish beauty might disarm
Wrath and suspicion? then, the crime unearthed,
Braved all and set her fierce Chaldeans' swords
Against the good priest Polydaon's heart,—
You did not hear that?—the good Polydaon
Who serves Poseidon with such zeal! Therefore
The god is angry: your wives, sisters, daughters,
Must suffer for Chaldean Cassiopea.

Cries Let us seize her and kill, kill, kill, kill her!

Dam.

Burn her!

Mor. Roast her!

Meg. Tear her into a million fragments.

Chab. But are they not our kings? We must obey them.

Ther. Wherefore must we obey them? Kings are men,
And they are set above their fellow-mortals
To serve us, friends,—not, surely, for our hurt!
Why should our sons and daughters bleed for them,
Syrians? Is not our blood as dear, as precious,
As human? Why should these kings, these men, go clad
In purple and in velvet while you toil
For little and are hungry and are naked.

Cries True, true, true!

Card. This is a wonderful man, this Therops. He has a
brain, countrymen.

Dam. A brain! He is no cleverer than you or I, Morus.

Mor. I should think not, Damoetes!

Dam. We knew these things long ago and did not need
wind-bag Therops to tell us!

Mor. We have talked them over often, Damoetes.

Meg. We'll have no more kings, countrymen.

Cries No kings, no kings!

Gard. Or Therops shall be king.

Cries Yes, Therops king! Therops king!

Dam. Good king Lungs! Oh, let us make him king,

Morus,—he will not pass wind in the market-place so often.

Ther. Poseidon is our king; we are his people.
Gods we must worship; why should we worship men
And set a heavenly crown on mortal weakness?
They have offended against great Poseidon,
They are guilty of a fearful sacrilege.
Let them perish.

Cries Kill them! let us appease Poseidon.

Chab. Worship Heaven's power, but bow before the king.

Ther. What need have we of kings? What are these kings?

Chab. They are the seed of gods.

Ther. Then, let them settle
Themselves their quarrel with their Olympian kindred.
Why should we suffer? Let Andromeda
Be exposed and Iolaus sacrificed;
Then shall Poseidon's wrath retire again
Into the continent of his vast billows.

Chab. If it must be so, let it come by award
Of quiet justice.

Ther. Justice! They are the judges
Who did the crime. Wherefore dost thou defend them?
Thou favourest then Poseidon's enemies?

Cries Kill him too, kill Chabrias. Poseidon, great
Poseidon! we are Poseidon's people.

Dam. Let him join his son and by the same road.

Mor. Beat his brains out—to see if he has any.

Ho! ho! ho!

Ther. Let him alone: he is a fool. Here comes
Our zealous good kind priest, our Polydaon.

Polydaon enters.

Cries Polydaon! Polydaon! the good Polydaon! Save us,
Polydaon:

Poly. Ah, do you call me now to save you? Last night
You did not save me when the foreign swords
Were near my heart.

- Meg.* Forgive us and protect.
- Dam.* You, lead us to the palace, be our chief.
- Mor.* We'll have no kings: lead, you: on to the palace!
- Meg.* Poseidon shall be king, thou his vicegerent.
- Gard.* Therops at thy right hand!
- Cries* Yes, Therops! Therops!
- Poly.* Oh, you are sane now, being let blood by scourgings!
Unhurt had been much better. But Poseidon
Pardons and I will save.
- Cries* Polydaon for ever, the good Polydaon, Poseidon's
Viceroy!
- Poly.* Swear then to do Poseidon's will.
- Cries* We swear!
- Dam.* Command and watch the effect!
- Poly.* Will not the tongue
Of Cassiopea once more change you, people?
- Dam.* We'll cut it out and feed her dogs with it.
- Poly.* Shall Iolaus bleed? Andromeda
Be trailed through the city and upon the rocks,
As the god wills, flung naked to his monsters?
Cepheus and Cassiopea die?
- Cries* They shall!
- Meg.* Not one of them shall live.
- Poly.* Then come, my children.
- Dam.* But the beast? Will it not tear us on the road?
- Poly.* It will not hurt you who do Poseidon's will.
I am your safeguard; I will march in front.
- Cries* To the palace, to the palace! We'll kill the Chal-
deans, strangle Cepheus, tear the Queen to pieces.
- Poly.* In order, in good order, my sweet children.
The mob surges out following Polydaon and
Therops: only Damoetes, Chabrias, Baltis and Pasithea
are left.
- Dam.* Come, Chabrias, we'll have sport.

Chab. My dead son calls me.

He goes out in another direction.

Balt. Pasithea, rise and come: you'll see her killed
Who is the murderess of your daughter.

Pas. Let me
Stay here and die.

Dam. Lift her up. Come, fool.
They go out, leading Pasithea.

SCENE 2

Cydone's Garden.

Cydone, Iolaus, Perseus.

Cyd. Perseus, you did not turn him into stone?
Iol. You cruelty! must one go petrifying
One's fellows through the world? 'T would not be decent.
Cyd. He would have been so harmless as a statue!
Pers. The morning has broken over Syria and the sun
Mounts royally into his azure kingdom.
I feel a stir within me as if great things
Were now in motion and clear-eyed Athene
Urging me on to high and helpful deeds.
There is a grandiose tumult in the air,
A voice of gods and Titans locked in wrestle.

Diomedes enters.

Diom. Ah, prince!

She bursts into tears.

Iol. Diomedes, what calamity?

Diom. Flee, flee, from Syria, save thyself.

Iol. From Syria!

Am I alone in peril? Then I'll sit
And wait.

Diom. Poseidon's monsters from the deep

• Arise to tear us for our sin. The people
In fury, led by Polydaon, march
Upon the palace, crying, "Slay the King,
Butcher the Queen, and let Andromeda
And Iolaus die." O my sweet playmate,

They swear they'll bind her naked to the rocks
Of the sea-beach for the grim monster's jaws
To tear and swallow.

Iol. My sword, my sword, Cydone!

Diom. Oh, go not to the fierce and bloody people!
Praxilla stole me out, hiding my face
In her grey mantle: I have outrun the wind
To warn you. Had the wild mob recognized me,
They would have torn me into countless pieces,
And will you venture near whose name they join
With death and cursings? Polydaon leads them.

Cyd. Had he been only stone!

Iol. My sword!

Cydone gives him the sword. Perseus goes out to the cottage.

Diom. You'll go?

What will you do alone against ten thousand?

Iol. To die is always easy. This canaille

I do not fear; it is a coward rabble.

Diom. But terror gives them fierceness: they are dangerous.

Iol. Keep Diomede for your service, love,
If I am killed; escape hence with your mother
To Gaza; she has gold: you may begin
A life as fair there. Sometimes remember me.

Cyd. Diomede, will you comfort my dear mother?
Tell her I am quite safe and will be back
By nightfall. Hush! this in your ear, Diomede.
Escape with her under the veil of night,
For I shall not come back. Be you her daughter
And comfort her sad lonely age, Diomede.

Iol. What do you mean, Cydone?

Cyd. Are you ready?

Let us be going.

Iol. Us, sweet lunatic?

Cyd. Often you've said that you and I are only one,
I shall know now if you mean it.

Iol. You shall not give
To the rude mob's ferocious violence
The beautiful body I have kissed so often.
You'll not obey me?

Cyd. No.
Iol. Leave this you shall not.

Cyd. I do not know how you will stop me.
Iol. Shrew!
You shall be stopped by bonds. Here you'll remain
Tied to a tree-trunk by your wilful wrists
Till all is over.

Perseus returns, armed.
Cyd. I'll bring the tree and all and follow you.
Iol. Oh, will you, Hercules?

Pers. Forbid her not,
My Iolaus; no tress of her shall fall.
I have arisen and all your turbulent Syria
Shall know me for the son of Zeus.

Iol. Perseus,
Art thou indeed a god? What wilt thou do,
One against a whole people? What way hast thou?

Pers. This is no hour to speak or plan, but to act.
A presence sits within my heart that sees
Each moment's need and finds the road to meet it.
Dread nothing; I am here to help and save.

Iol. I had almost forgotten; the might thou hast shown
Is a sufficient warrant.

Cyd. I shall come back,
Diomede.

Pers. My grip is firm on Herpe,
Athene's ægis guards my wrist; herself
The strong, omnipotent and tranquil goddess
Governs my motions with her awful will.
Have trust in me. Borne on my bright-winged sandals
Invisibly I will attend your course

On the light breezes.

He goes out followed by Iolaus and Cydone.

Diom.

I am too tired to follow,

Too daunted with their mad-beast howls.

Here let me hide

Awaiting what event this war of gods

May bring to me and my sweet-hearted lady.

O my Andromeda! my little playmate!

She goes out towards the cottage weeping.

SCENE 3

A room commanding the outer Court of the Palace.

Nebassar, Praxilla.

Prax. I have seen them from the roof; at least ten thousand
March through the streets. Do you not hear their
rumour,

A horrid hum as of unnumbered hornets
That slowly nears us?

Neb. If they are so many,
It will be hard to save the princess.

Prax. Save her!

It is too late now to save anyone.

Neb. I fear so.

Prax. But never is too late to die
As loyal servants for the lords whose bread
We have eaten. At least we women of the household
Will show the way to you Chaldeans.

Neb. We are soldiers,
Praxilla, and need no guidance on a road
We daily tread in prospect. I'll bring my guards.

He goes out saluting Cassiopea who enters.

Cass. Swift Diomedes must have reached by now,
Praxilla.

Prax. I hope so, madam.

She goes out to the inner apartments.

Cass. Then Iolaus

Is safe. My sad heart has at least that comfort.
O my Andromeda, my child Andromeda,
Thou wouldst not let me save thee. Hadst thou too gone,

I would have smiled when their fierce fingers rent me.

Cepheus enters.

Ceph. The mob is nearing; all my Syrian guards
Have fled; we cannot hope for safety now.

Cass. Then what is left but to set rapid fire
To the rafters and prevent on friendly swords
The rabble's outrage?

Ceph. Was it for such a fate
Thou camest smiling from an emperor's palace,
O Cassiopea, Cassiopea!

Cass. For me
Grieve not.

Ceph. O Lady, princess of Chaldea,
Pardon me who have brought thee to this doom.
Yet I meant well and thought that I did wisely:
But the gods wrest our careful policies
To their own ends until we stand appalled
Remembering what we meant to do and seeing
What has been done.

Cass. With no half soul I came
To share thy kingdom and thy joys; entirely
I came, to take the evil also with thee.

Ceph. Is there no truth in our high-winged ideals?
My rule was mild as spring, kind as the zephyr:
It tempered justice with benevolence
And offered pardon to the rebel and sinner;
I showed mercy, the rare sign of gods and kings.
In this too difficult world, this too brief life
To serve the gods with virtue seemed the best.
A nation's happiness was my only care:
I made the people's love my throne's sure base
And dreamed the way I chose true, great, divine.
But the heavenly gods have other thoughts than man's;
Their awful aims transcend our human sight.
Another doom than I had hoped they gave.

- Cass.* A screened Necessity drives even the gods.
Over human lives it strides to unseen ends;
Our tragic failures are its stepping-stones.
- Ceph.* My father lived calm, just, pitiless, austere,
As a stern god might sway a prostrate world:
Admired and feared, he died a mighty king.
My end is this abominable fate.
- Cass.* Another law than mercy's rules the earth.
- Ceph.* If I had listened to thee, O Cassiopea,
Chance might have taken a fairer happier course.
Always thou saidst to me, "The people's love
Is a glimmer on quicksands in a gliding sea:
Today they are with thee, to-morrow turn elsewhere.
Wisdom, strength, policy alone are sure."
I thought I better knew my Syrian folk.
Is this not my well-loved people at my door,
This tiger-hearted mob with bestial growl,
This cry for blood to drink, this roar of hate?
Always thou spok'st to me of the temple's power,
A growing danger menacing the State,
Its ambition's panther crouch and serpent pride
And cruel craft in a priest's sombre face:
I only saw the god and sacred priest.
To priest and god I am thrown a sacrifice.
The golden-mouthed orator of the market-place,
Therops, thou bad'st me fear and quell or win
Gaining his influence to my side. To me
He seemed a voice and nothing but a voice.
Too late I learn that human speech has power
To change men's hearts and turn the stream of Time.
Thy eyes could read in Phineus' scheming brain.
I only thought to buy the strength of Tyre
Offering my daughter as unwilling price.
He has planned my fall and watches my agony.
At every step I have been blind, have failed:

All was my error; all's lost and mine the fault.

Cass. Blame not thyself; what thou hadst to be, thou wert,
And never yet came help from vain remorse.
It is too late, too late. To die is left;
Fate and the gods concede us nothing more.

Ceph. But strength to meet the doom is always ours.
In royal robes and crowned we will show ourselves
To our people and look in the eyes of death and fate.
What is this armoured tramp?

*The Chaldean guards enter with Nebassar at
their head.*

Captains

O King, we come

To die with thee, the soldiers of Chaldea;
For all in Syria have abandoned thee.

Ceph. I thank you, soldiers.

Cries outside

Poseidon, great Poseidon! we are Poseidon's people.
In, in, in! Kill the cuckold Cepheus, tear the harlot Cas-
siopea.

Ceph. Voices of insolent outrage
Proclaim the heartless rabble. On the steps
Of our own palace we'll receive our subjects.

Cass. This, this becomes thee, monarch.

Neb. Soldiers, form
With serried points before these mighty sovereigns.

*The mob surges in, Therops and Perissus at
their head, Polydaon a little behind, Damoetes, Morus and the
rest. Praxilla and others of the household come running in.*

Mob On them! on them! Cut the Chaldeans to pieces!

Ther. Halt, people, halt: let there be no vain bloodshed.

Cass. Here is a tender-hearted demagogue!

Ther. Cepheus and Cassiopea, 'tis vain and heinous
To dally with your fate; it will only make you
More criminal before the majesty
Of the offended people.

Ceph.

Majesty!

Cass.

An unwashed majesty and a wolf-throated!

Ther.

Insolent woman, to thee I speak not. Cepheus,—

Ceph.

Use humbler terms. I am thy King as yet.

Ther.

The last in Syria. Tell me, wilt thou give up
Thy children to the altar, and thyself
Surrender here with this Chaldean woman
For mercy or judgment to the assembled will
Of Syria.

Cass.

A tearing mercy, a howling judgment!

Poly.

Therops, why do you treat with these? Chaldeans!
And you, Praxilla! women of the household!
Bring out the abominable Andromeda
Who brought the woe on Syria. Why should you vainly
Be ripped and mangled?

Cries of women

Bring out Andromeda!

Bring out the harlot's daughter, bring her out!

Cries of men

Andromeda! Andromeda! Andromeda!
Bring out this vile Andromeda to die!

*Andromeda enters from the inner Palace,
followed by slave-girls entreating and detaining her.*

Prax. (sorrowfully)

Wilt thou be wilful even to the end?

Cass.

Alas, my child!

Andr.

Mother, weep not for me. Perhaps my death
May save you; and 'tis good that I should die,
Not these poor innocent people. Against me
Their unjust god is wroth.

Ceph.

O my poor sunbeam!

Andr. (advancing and showing herself to the people)

O people who have loved me, you have called me
And I am here.

A fierce roar from the mob.

Ther.

How she shrinks back appalled!

Prax. God! What a many-throated howl of demons!
Their eyes glare death. These are not men and Syrians.
The fierce Poseidon has possessed their breasts
And breathed his awful blood-lust into all hearts
Deafening the voice of reason, slaying pity:
Poseidon's rage glares at us through these eyes,
It is his ocean roar that fills our streets.

Cries from the mob.

Balt. Seize her! seize her! the child of wickedness!

Voices of women

Throw her to us! throw her to us! We will pick
The veins out of her body one by one.

Dam. Throw her to us! We will burn her bit by bit.

Mor. Yes, cook her alive; no, Damoetes? Ho, ho, ho!

Voices of men

She has killed our sons and daughters: kill her! kill her.

Voices of women

She is the child of her wicked mother: kill her!

Mob Throw her to us! throw her to us!

Meg. We'll tear her here, and the furies shall tear her
afterwards for ever in Hell.

Ther. Peace, people! she is not yours, she is Poseidon's.

Andr. Alas, why do you curse me? I am willing
To die for you. If I had known this morn
The monster's advent, I would have gone and met him
While you yet slept, and saved your poor fair children
Whose pangs have been my own. Had I died first,
I should not then have suffered. O my loved people,
You loved me too: when I went past your homes,
You blessed me always; often your girls and mothers
Would seize and bind me to their eager breasts
With close imprisonment, kiss on their doorways
And with a smiling soft reluctance leave.
O do not curse me now! I can bear all,
But not your curses.

- Per.* Alack, my pretty lady!
What madness made you do it?
- Poly.* She has rewarded
Your love by bringing death upon you, Syrians,
And now she tries to melt you by her tears.
- Mob* Kill her, kill her! Cut the Chaldeans to pieces!
We will have her!
- Pas.* O do not hurt her! She is like my child
Whom the fierce monster tore.
- Meg.* Unnatural mother!
Would you protect her who's cause your child was eaten?
- Pas.* Will killing her give back my child to me?
- Meg.* No, it will save the children of more mothers.
- Dam.* Gag up her puling mouth, the white-faced fool!
- Voices* Tear, tear Andromeda! Seize her and tear her!
- Women* Let us only get at her with our teeth and fingers!
- Neb.* Use swords, Chaldeans.
- Poly.* Order, my children, order!
Chaldean, give us up Andromeda,
And save your King and Queen.
- Neb.* What, wilt thou spare them?
- Cass.* Thou wilt not give my child to him, Nebassar?
Thou dar'st not!
- Neb.* Queen, 'tis better one should die
For all.
- Poly.* I swear to thee, I will protect them.
- Cass.* Trust not his oaths, his false and murderous oaths.
- Neb.* He is a priest: if we believe him, nothing
We lose, something may gain.
- Meg.* What wilt thou do?
The people do not like it. See, they mutter.
- Poly.* Let me have first their daughter in my grip,
Be sure of the god's dearest victim. People,
I am Poseidon's priest and your true friend.
Leave all to me.

Cries Leave all to Polydaon! the good priest knows
what he is doing.

Poly. Soldiers, give up the Princess.

Neb. Shall she be only given to Poseidon?
Will you protect her from worse outrage?

Poly. I will.

Prax. Look! what a hideous triumph lights the eyes
Of that fierce man. He glares at her with greed
Like a wild beast of prey, and on his mouth
There is a cruel unclean foam. Nebassar,
O do not give her.

Neb. If there were any help!
Go forth, O princess, O Andromeda.

Cass. My child! my child!

Andr. Give me one kiss, my mother.
We shall yet meet, I think. My royal father,
Andromeda farewells you, whom you loved
And called your sunbeam. But the night receives me.

Ceph. Alas!

Dam. How long will these farewells endure?
They are not needed: you shall meet presently
If Death's angels can collect your tattered pieces.

Cass. O savage Syrians, let my curses brood
Upon your land, an anguished mother's curse.
May the Assyrian come and flay you living,
Impale your sons, rip up your ravished daughters
Before your agonising eyes and make you feel,
Who drag my child from me to butcher her,
The horror that you do. I curse you, Syrians.

Andr. Hush, mother, mother! what they demand is just.

Neb. Lead back the King and Queen into the Palace,
Women. We too will from this sad surrender
Remove our eyes.

Cass. I will not go. Let them tear her
Before me: then surely Heaven will avenge me.

Ceph. Come, Cassiopea, come: our death's delayed
By a few minutes. I will not see her slain.

*Cepheus and Praxilla go in, forcibly
leading Cassiopea; they are followed by the slave-girls and
then by Nebassar and the Chaldeans: Andromeda is left alone
on the steps.*

Cries of the mob surging forward

Drag her, kill her, she is ours.

Poly. Therops and thou, Perissus, stand in front
And keep the people off, or they will tear her,
Defraud Poseidon.

Per. Cheer up, my princess, come!
You shall be cleanly killed.

Ther. People of Syria,
Rob not Poseidon of his own! 'tis not the way
To turn his anger.

Voices Right, right! leave her to Poseidon: out with her to
the sea-monster.

Gard. Therops is always right.

Dam. We will have her first: we will dress his banquet for
him: none shall say us nay.

Mor. Good; we will show Poseidon some excellent cookery.
Ho, ho, ho!

Meg. No, no, no! To the rocks with her! Strip her, the
fine dainty princess, and hang her up in chains on the cliff-
face.

A woman

Strip her! Off with her broidered robe and her
silken tunic! Why should she wear such, when my daugh-
ter carries only coarse woollen?

A woman (shaking her fist)

Curse the white child's face of thee: it has ruined
Syria. Die, dog's daughter.

Dam. Is she to die only once who has killed so many of us?

I say, tie her to one of these pillars and flog her till she drops.

Mor. That's right, skin her with whips: peel her for the monster, ho, ho, ho!

Balt. Leave her: Hell's tortures shall make the account even.

Poly. In order, children: let all be done in order.

Ther. She droops like a bruised flower beneath their curses,
And the tears lace her poor pale cheeks like frost
Glittering on snowdrops. I am sorry now
I had a hand in this.

Andr. You two have faces
Less cruel than the others. I am willing
To die,—oh, who would live to be so hated?
But do not let them shame or torture me.

Per. Off! off! thick-brained dogs, loud-lunged asses!
What do you do, yelping and braying here? Will you give
a maimed meal to Poseidon's manhound? Do you know
me not? Have you never heard of Perissus, never seen
Perissus the butcher? I guard Poseidon's meat, and who-
ever touches a morsel of it, I will make meat of him with
my cleaver. I am Perissus, I am the butcher.

Voices It is Perissus, the good and wealthy butcher. He is
right. To the rocks with her!

Voices of women

Bind her first: we will see her bound!

Per. In all that is rational, I will indulge you.
Where is a cord?

Cries A cord, who has a cord?

Dam. Here is one, Perissus. 'Tis rough and strong and sure.

Per. Come, wear your bracelets.

Andr. O bind me not so hard!
You cut my wrists.

She weeps.

Per. You are too soft and tender.

There, dry your eyes,—but that, poor slip, you cannot.
 See, I have tied you very lightly: say not
 That this too hurts.

Andr. I thank you; you are kind.

Per. Kind! Why should I not be kind? Because I am a
 butcher must I have no bowels? Courage, little Princess:
 none shall hurt thee but thy sea-monster and he, I am sure,
 will crunch thy little bones very tenderly. Never had
 man-eater such sweet bones to crunch. Alack! but where
 is the remedy?

Poly. Now take her to the beach and chain her there
 Upon the rocks to bear her punishment.
 Perissus, lead her forth! We'll follow you.

Cries Not I! not I!

Dam. You'd kill us, Polydaon!
 Poseidon's anger walks by the sea-beaches.

Poly. The fierce sea-dragon will not hurt you, friends,
 Who bring a victim to Poseidon's altar
 Of the rude solemn beaches. I'll protect you.

Cries We'll go with Polydaon! with the good Polydaon!

Poly. Perissus, go before. We'll quickly come.

Per. Make way there or I'll make it with my cleaver.
 Heart, little Princess! None shall touch thee. Heart!

Perissus and others make their way out with Andromeda.

Poly. Hem, people, hem the Palace in with myriads:
 We'll pluck out Cepheus and proud Cassiopea.

Cries Kill Cepheus the cuckold, the tyrant! Tear the
 harlot Cassiopea.

Ther. Is this thy sacred oath? Had not Nebassar
 Thy compact, priest?

Poly. I swore not by Poseidon.
 Wilt thou oppose me?

Ther. Thy perjury too much
 Favours my private wishes. Yet would I not
 Be thou with such a falsehood on my conscience.

- Poly.* Why, Therops, be thyself and thou shalt yet
Be something great in Syria.
- Dam.* Where's Iolaus?
Shall he not also die?
- Poly.* Too long forgotten!
O that I should forget my dearest hatred!
By this he has concealed himself or fled
And I am baulked of what I chiefly cherished.
- Ther.* Oh, do them justice! the great house of Syria
Were never cowards. The prince has been o'erwhelmed
On his way hither with rash sword to rescue:
So Aligattas tells, who came behind us.
He's taken to the temple.
- Poly.* Heard you?
- Mob* Hurrah!
- Balt.* But what's the matter now with our good priest?
His veins are all out and his face is blood-red!
- Dam.* This joy is too great for him.
- Poly.* I am a god,
A god of blood and roaring victory.
Oh, blood in rivers! His heart out of his breast,
And his mother there to see it! and I to laugh
At her, to laugh!
- Ther.* This is not sanity.
- Poly.* (*controlling himself with a great effort*)
The sacrilegious house is blotted out
Of Cepheus. Let not one head outlive their ending!
Andromeda appoints the way to Hades
Who was in crime the boldest, then her brother
Yells on the altar: last Cepheus and his Queen—
- Cries* Tear her! let the Chaldean harlot die.
- Poly.* She shall be torn! but not till she has seen
The remnants of the thing that was her daughter:
Not till her sweet boy's heart has been plucked out

Under her staring eyes from his red bosom.
 Till then she shall not die. But afterwards
 Strew with her fragments every street of the city.
Cries Hear, hear Poseidon's Viceroy, good Polydaon!
Meg. In! in! cut off their few and foreign swordsmen.
Cries In! in! let not a single Chaldean live.

*The mob rushes into the Palace; only
 Therops and Polydaon remain.*

Poly. Go, Therops, take good care of Cassiopea,
 Or she will die too mercifully soon.

Ther. (aside)

How shall we bear this grim and cruel beast
 For monarch, when all's done! He is not human.

He goes into the Palace.

Poly. I have set Poseidon's rage in human hearts;
 His black and awful Influence flows from me.
 Thou art a mighty god, Poseidon, yet
 And mightily thou hast avenged thyself.
 The drama's nearly over. Now to ring out
 The royal characters amid fierce howlings
 And splendid, pitiless, crimson massacre,—
 A great finale! Then, then I shall be King.

*(As he speaks, he gesticulates more wildly and his
 madness gains upon him.)*

Thou luckless Phineus, wherefore didst thou leave
 So fortunate a man for thy ally?
 The world shall long recall King Polydaon.
 I will paint Syria gloriously with blood.
 Hundreds shall daily die to incarnadine
 The streets of my city and my palace floors,
 For I would walk in redness. I'll plant my gardens
 With heads instead of lilacs. Hecatombs
 Of men shall groan their hearts out for my pleasure
 In crimson rivers. I'll not wait for shipwrecks.
 Assyrian captives and my Syrian subjects,

Nobles and slaves, men, matrons, boys and virgins
At matins and at vespers shall be slain
To me in my magnificent high temple
Beside my thunderous Ocean. I will possess
Women each night, who the next day shall die,
Encrimsoned richly for the eyes' delight.
My heart throngs out in words! What moves within me?
I am athirst, magnificently athirst,
And for a red and godlike wine. Whence came
The thirst on me? It was not here before.
'Tis thou, 'tis thou, O grand and grim Poseidon,
Hast made thy scarlet session in my soul
And growest myself. I am not Polydaon,
I am a god, a mighty dreadful god,
The multitudinous mover in the sea,
The shaker of the earth: I am Poseidon
And I will walk in three tremendous paces
Climbing the mountains with my clamorous waters
And see my dogs eat up Andromeda,
My enemy, and laugh in my loud billows.
The clamour of battle roars within the Palace!
I have created it, I am Poseidon.
Sit'st thou, my elder brother, charioted
In clouds? Look down, O brother Zeus, and see
My actions! they merit thy immortal gaze.

He goes into the Palace.

SCENE 4

On the road to the sea-shore.

Phineus and his Tyrians.

Phin. A mighty power confounds our policies.
Is't Heaven? is't Fate? What's left me, I will take.
'Tis best to rescue young Andromeda
From the wild mob and bear her home to Tyre.
She, when the roar is over, will be left
My claim to Syria's prostrate throne, which force,
If not diplomacy shall re-erect
And Tyre become the Syrian capital.
I hear the trampling of the rascal mob.

Cries outside

Drag her more quickly! To the rocks! to the rocks!
Glory to great Poseidon!

Phin. Tyrians, be ready.
Perissus and a number of Syrians enter leading 'Andromeda bound.

Syrians To the rocks with her, to the rocks! bind her on the
rocks.

Phin. Pause, rabble! Yield your prey to Tyrian Phineus.
Lift up thy lovely head, Andromeda!
For thou art saved.

Per. Who art thou with thy nose and thy fellows and thy
spits?

Phin. Know'st thou me not? I am the royal Phineus.
Yield up the Princess, fair Andromeda.

Per. Art thou the royal Phineus and is this long nose thy sceptre? I am Perissus, the butcher. Stand aside, royal Phineus, or I will chop thee royally with my cleaver.

Andr. What wilt thou with me, King of Tyre?

Phin. Sweet rose,

I come to save thee. I will carry thee,
My bride, far from these savage Syrian tumults
To reign in loyal Tyre. Thou art safe.

Andr. (*sorrowfully*)

Safe!

My father and my mother are not safe
Nor Iolaus: nor is Syria safe.

Will you protect my people, when the god,
Not finding me, his preferable victim,
Works his fierce will on these?

Phin. Thou car'st for them?

They have o'erwhelmed thee with foul insult, bound thee,
Threatened thy lovely limbs with rascal outrage
And dragged to murder!

Andr. But they are my people.

Perissus, lead me on. I will not go with him.

Phin. Thou strange and beautiful and marvellous child,
Wilt thou or wilt thou not, by force I'll have thee.
Golden enchantment! thou art too rare a thing
For others to possess. Run, rascal rabble!
On, Tyrians!

Per. Cleavers and axes to their spits!

Andr. King Phineus, pause! I swear I will prefer
Death's grim embrace rather than be thy wife
Abandoning my people. 'Tis a dead body
Thou wilt rescue.

Phin. Is thy resolve unshakable?

Andr. It is.

Phin. Die then! To Death alone I yield thee.

He goes out with his Tyrians.

Per. So then thou art off, royal Phineus! so thou hast
 evaporated, bold god of the Hittites! Thou hast saved thy
 royal nose from my cleaver.

Syrians On to the rocks! Glory to great Poseidon.

They go leading Andromeda.

SCENE 5

The Sea-shore.

Andromeda, dishevelled, bare-armed and unsandalled, stripped of all but a single light robe, stands on a wide low ledge under a rock jutting out from the cliff with the sea washing below her feet. She is chained to the rock behind her by her wrists and ankles, her arms stretched at full length against its side.

Polydaon, Perissus, Damoetes and a number of Syrians stand near on the great rocky platform projecting from the cliff of which the ledge is the extremity.

Poly. There meditate affronts to dire Poseidon.
Rescue thyself, thou rescuer of victims!
I am sorry that thy marriage, sweet Andromeda,
So poorly is attended. I could have wished
To have all Syria gazing at thy nuptials
With thy rare Ocean bridegroom! Thy mother most
Should have been here to see her lovely princess
So meetly robed for bridal, with these ornaments
Upon her pretty hands and feet. She has
Affairs too pressing. We do some surgery
Upon thy brother Iolaus' heart
To draw the bad blood out and make it holy,
And she must watch the skilful operation.
Do not weep, fair one. Soon, be confident,
They'll meet thee in that wide house where all are going.
Think of these things until thy lover comes.
Farewell.

Per. Art thou mad, priest Polydaon? How thou grinnest
and drawest back thy black lips from thy white teeth in
thy rapture! Hast thou gone clean mad, my skilful carver
of hearts! art thou beside thyself, my ancient schoolmate
and crony?

Syrians To the temple! To the temple!

Poly. Let one remain above the cliff.
And watch the monster's advent and his going.
Till I have news of dead Andromeda
The sacrifice cannot begin. Who stays?

Dam. Not I!

All Nor I! nor I! nor I!

Dam. As well stay here with the girl and be torn with her!

Per. Do you quake, my brave shouters? must you curl
your tails in between your manly legs? I will stay, priest,
who fear neither dog nor dragon. I am Perissus, I am
the butcher.

Poly. I'll not forget thy service, good Perissus.

Per. Will you then make me butcher-in-chief to your vice-
roy in Damascus, and shall I cut my joints under the patro-
nage of King Polydaon? To the temple, Syrian heroes! I
will go and cross my legs on the cliff-top.

They go. Andromeda is left alone.

Curtain.

ACT V

SCENE 1

The sea-shore. Andromeda chained to the cliff.

Andr. O iron-throated vast unpitying sea,
Whose borders touch my feet with their cold kisses
As if they loved me! yet from thee my death
Will soon arise, and in some monstrous form
To tear my heart with horror before my body.
I am alone with thee on this wild beach
Filled with the echo of thy roaring waters.
My fellowmen have cast me out: they have bound me
Upon thy rocks to die. These cruel chains
Weary the arms they keep held stiffly out
Against the rough cold jagged stones. My bosom
Hardly contains its thronging sobs; my heart
Is torn with misery: for by my act
My father and my mother are doomed to death,
My kind dear brother, my sweet Iolaus,
Will cruelly be slaughtered; by my act
A kingdom ends in miserable ruin.
I thought to save two fellowmen: I have slain
A hundred by their rescue. I have failed
In all I did and die accursed and hated.
I die alone and miserably, no heart
To pity me: only your hostile waves
Are listening to my sobs and laughing hoarsely
With cruel pleasure. Heaven looks coldly on.
Yet I repent not. O thou dreadful god!
Yes, thou art dreadful and most mighty; perhaps
This world will always be a world of blood

And smiling cruelty, thou its fit sovereign.
 But I have done what my own heart required of me,
 And I repent not. Even if after death
 Eternal pain and punishment await me
 And gods and men pursue me with their hate,
 I have been true to myself and to my heart,
 I have been true to the love it bore for men,
 And I repent not.

She is silent for awhile.

Alas! is there no pity for me? Is there
 No kind bright sword to save me in all this world?
 Heaven with its cold unpitying azure roofs me,
 And the hard savage rocks surround: the deaf
 And violent Ocean roars about my feet,
 And all is stony, all is cold and cruel.
 Yet I had dreamed of other powers. Where art thou,
 O beautiful still face amid the lightnings,
 Athene? Does a mother leave her child?
 And thou, bright stranger, wert thou only a dream?
 Wilt thou not come down glorious from thy sun,
 And cleave my chains, and lift me in thy arms
 To safety? I will not die! I am too young,
 And life was recently so beautiful.
 It is too hard, too hard a fate to bear.

*She is silent, weeping. Cydone enters:
 she comes and sits down at Andromeda's feet.*

Cyd. How beautiful she is, how beautiful!
 Her tears bathe all her bosom. O cruel Syrians!

Andr. What gentle touch is on my feet? Who art thou?

Cyd. I am Cydone. Iolaus loves me.

Andr. My brother! lives he yet?

Cyd. He lives, dear sweetness,
 And sent me to you.

Andr. (joyfully)

It was a cruel lie!

He's free?

Cyd. No, bound and in the temple. Weep not.

Andr. Alas! And you have left him there alone?

Cyd. The gods are with him, sister. In a few hours
We shall be all together and released
From these swift perils.

Andr. Together and released!

Oh yes, in death.

Cyd. I bid you hope. O child,
How beautiful you are, how beautiful,
Iolaus' sister! This one white slight garment
Fluttering about you in the ocean winds,
You look like some wind-goddess chained in play
By frolic sisters on the wild sea-beaches.
I think all this has happened, little sister,
Just that the gods might have for one brief hour
You for a radiant vision of childish beauty
Exposed against this wild stupendous background.

Andr. You make me smile in spite of all my grief.
Did you not bid me hope, Cydone?

Cyd. And now

I bid you trust: for you are saved.

Andr. I am.

I feel it now.

Cyd. Your name's Andromeda?

Andr. Iolaus calls me so.

Cyd. I think he cheats me.

You are Iolaus changed into a girl.
Come, I will kiss you dumb for cheating me
With changes of yourself.

Kisses her.

If I could have
My Iolaus always chained like this
To do my pleasure with, I would so plague him!
For he abuses me and calls me shrew,
Monster and vixen and names unbearable,

- Because he's strong and knows I cannot beat him.
Andr. The world is changed about me.
Cyd. Heaven's above.
 Look up and see it.
Andr. There is a golden cloud
 Moving towards me.
Cyd. It is Perseus. Sweetheart,
 I go to Iolaus in the temple,—
 I mean your other fair boy-self. Kiss me,
 O sweet girl-Iolaus, and fear nothing.
She goes out over the rocks.
Andr. I shall be saved! What is this sudden trouble
 That lifts the bosom of the tossing deep,
 Hurling the waves against my knees? Save me!
 Where art thou gone, Cydone? What huge head
 Raises itself on the affrighted seas?
 Where art thou, O my saviour? Come! His eyes
 Glare up at me from the grey Ocean trough
 Hideous with brutish longing. Like great sharp rocks
 His teeth are in a bottomless dim chasm.
She closes her eyes in terror. Perseus enters.
Pers. Look up, O sunny-curved Andromeda!
 Perseus, the son of Danaë, is with thee
 To whom thou now belongest. Fear no more
 Sea-monsters nor the iron-souled Poseidon,
 Nor the more monstrous flinty-hearted rabble
 Who bound thee here. This huge and grisly enemy
 That rises from the flood, need not affright thee.
 Thou art as safe as if thy mother's arms
 Contained thee in thy brilliant guarded palace
 When all was calm, O white Andromeda!
 Lift up thy eyes' long curtains: aid the azure
 With thy regards, O sunshine. Look at me
 And see thy safety.

Andr. O thou hast come to me!

It was not only a radiant face I dreamed of.

Pers. In time to save thee, my Andromeda,
Sole jewel of the world. I go to meet
Thy enemy, confronting grim Poseidon.

Andr. O touch me ere you go that I may feel
You are real.

Pers. Let my kiss, sweet doubting dreamer,
Convince thee. Now I dart like a swift hawk
Upon my prey and smite betwixt the billows.
Watch how I fight for thee. I will come soon
To gather thee into my grasp, my prize
Of great adventure.

He goes out.

Andr. The music of his name
Was in my brain just now. What must I call thee?
Perseus, the son of Danaë! Perseus!
Perseus, Athene's sword! Perseus, my sungod!
O human god of glad Andromeda!
Forgive, Athene, my lack of faith. Thou art!
How like a sudden eagle he has swooped
Upon the terror, that lifts itself alarmed,
Swings its huge length along the far-ridged billows
And upwards yawns its rage. O great Athene!
It belches fiery breath against my Perseus
And lashes Ocean in his face. The sea
Is tossed upon itself and its huge bottoms
Catch chinks of unaccustomed day. But the ægis
Of Perseus hurls the flame-commingled flood
Back in the dragon's eyes: it shoots its lightnings
Into the horizon like fire-trailing arrows.
The world surprised with light gazes dismayed
Upon the sea-surrounded war, ringed in
With foam and flying tumult. O glorious sight,
Too swift and terrible for human eyes!

I will pray rather. Virgin, beautiful
 Athene, virgin-mother of my soul!
 I cannot lift my hands to thee, they are chained
 To the wild cliff, but lift my heart instead,
 Virgin, assist thy hero in the fight.
 Descend, armipotent maiden, child of Zeus,
 Shoot from his god-like brain the strength of will
 That conquers evil: in one victorious stroke
 Collecting hurl it on the grisly foe.
 Thou, thou art sword and shield, and thou the force
 That uses shield and sword, virgin Athene.
 The tumult ceases and the floods subside.
 I dare not look. And yet I will. O death,
 Thou tосsest there inertly on the flood,
 A floating mountain. Perseus comes to me
 Touching the waves with airy-sandalled feet,
 Bright and victorious.

Perseus returns.

Pers. The grisly beast is slain that was thy terror,
 And thou may'st sun the world with smiles again,
 Andromeda.

Andr. Thou hast delivered me, O Perseus, Perseus,
 My sovereign.

Pers. Girl, I take into my arms
 My own that I have won and with these kisses
 Seal to me happy head and smiling eyes,
 Bright lips and all of thee, thou sunny Syrian.
 All thy white body is a hero's guerdon.

Andr. Perseus!

Pers. Sweetly thou tak'st my eager kisses
 With lovely smiles and glorious blushing cheeks
 Rejoicing in their shame.

Andr. I am chained, Perseus,
 And cannot help myself.

Pers. O smile of sweetness!

I will unravel these unworthy bonds
And rid thee of the cold excuse.

Andr. My chains?
They do not hurt me now, and I would wear them
A hundred times for such a happy rescue.

Pers. Thou tremblest yet!

Andr. Some sweet and sudden fear
O'ertakes me! O what is it? I dare not look
Into thy radiant eyes.

Pers. Sweet tremors, grow
Upon her. Never shall harsher fears again
O'ertake your rosy limbs, in Perseus' keeping.
How fair thou art, my prize Andromeda!
O sweet chained body, chained to love not death,
That with a happy passiveness endures
My touch, once more, once more. And now fall down
Clashing into the deep, you senseless irons,
That took a place my kisses only merit.
Princess of Syria, child of imperial Cepheus,
Step forward free.

Andr. (*falling at his feet and embracing them*)

O Perseus, O my saviour!
Wilt thou not also save those dear to me
And make this life thou givest worth the giving?
My father, mother, brother, all I love,
Lie for my fault shuddering beneath the knife.

Pers. It was a glorious fault, Andromeda.
Tremble not for thy loved ones. Wilt thou trust
Thy cherished body in my arms to bear
Upward, surprising Heaven with thy beauty?
Or wilt thou fear to see the blue wide Ocean
Between thy unpropped feet, fathoms below?

Andr. With you I fear not.

Pers.

Cling to me then, sweet burden,

And we will meet our enemies together.

He puts his arms round her to lift her and the curtain falls.

SCENE 2

The Temple of Poseidon.

Polydaon, Therops, Dercetes, Cydone, Damoetes and a great number of Syrians, men and women. Iolaus stands bound, a little to the side: Cepheus and Cassiopea surrounded by armed men.

Poly. Cepheus and Cassiopea, man and woman,
Not sovereigns now, you see what end they have
Who war upon the gods.

Cass. To see thy end
My eyes wait only.

Poly. Let them see something likelier,
Is't not thy son who wears those cords and that
An altar? What! the eyes are drowned in tears
Where fire was once so ready? Where is thy pride,
O Cassiopea?

Cass. There are other gods
Than thy Poseidon. They shall punish thee.

Poly. If thou knew'st who I am, which is most secret,
Thou wouldst not utter vain and foolish wishes.
When thou art slain, I will reveal myself.

Cass. Thou hast revealed thyself for what thou art
Already, a madman and inhuman monster.

Ceph. My queen, refrain from words.

Dam. Perissus comes.

Cass. Ah God!

Ther. Look, the Queen swoons! Oh, look to her!
Perissus enters.

- Poly.* Yes, raise her up, bring back her senses: now
I would not have them clouded. News, Perissus!
Thy face is troubled and thy eyes stare wildly.
- Per.* Stare, do they? They may stare, for they have cause.
You too will stare soon, Viceroy Polydaon.
- Ther.* What rare thing happened? The heavens were troubled
strangely,
Although their rifts were blue. What hast thou seen?
- Per.* I have seen hell and heaven at grips together.
- Poly.* What do I care for hell or heaven? Your news!
Did the sea-monster come and eat and go?
- Per.* He came but went not.
- Poly.* Was not the maiden seized?
- Per.* Ay, was she, in a close and mighty grasp.
- Poly.* By the sea-beast?
- Per.* 'Tis said we all are animals;
Then so was he: but 't was a glorious beast.
- Poly.* And was she quite devoured?
- Per.* Why, in a manner,—
If kisses eat.
- Poly.* Ha! ha! such soft caresses
May all my enemies have. She was not torn?
What, was she taken whole and quite engulfed?
- Per.* Something like that.
- Poly.* You speak with difficult slowness
And strangely. Where's your blithe robustness gone,
Perissus?
- Per.* Coming, with the beast. He lifted her
Mightily from the cliff to heaven.
- Poly.* So, Queen,
Nothing is left thee of Andromeda.
- Per.* Why, something yet, a sweet and handsome piece.
- Poly.* You should have brought it here, my merry butcher,
That remnant of her daughter.
- Per.* It is coming.

Poly. Ho, ho! then you shall see your daughter, queen.

Derc. This is a horrid and inhuman laughter.

Restrain thy humour, priest! My sword's uneasy.

Ther. It is a scandal in Poseidon's temple.

Poly. Do you oppose me?

(*to Therops*)

Wilt thou resist Poseidon,

Misguided mortal?

Derc. He glares and his mouth works,

This is a maniac. Does a madman rule us?

Ther. There has been much of violence and mad fierceness,

Such as in tumults may be pardoned. Now

It is the tranquil hour of victory

When decency should reign and mercy too.

What do we gain by torturing this poor Queen

And most unhappy King?

Poly. Hear him, O people!

He favours great Poseidon's enemies.

Therops turns traitor.

Dam. He rails at the good priest.

Cries Therops a traitor!

Meg. Therops, thou favour kings?

Thou traitor to Poseidon and his people?

Gard. I say, hear Therops. He is always right,

Our Therops; he has brains.

Cries Hear Therops, Therops!

Ther. Let them be punished, but with exile only.

I am no traitor. I worked for you, O people,

When this false priest was with the King of Tyre

Plotting to lay on you a foreign chain.

Cries Is it so? Is it the truth? Speak, Polydaon.

Poly. Must I defend myself? Was it not I

Who led you on to victory and turned

The wrath of dire Poseidon? If you doubt me,

Be then the sacrifice forbidden; let Cepheus

- And Cassiopea reign; but when the dogs
Of grim Poseidon howl again behind you,
Call not to me for help. I will not always pardon.
- Cries* Polydaon, Polydaon, Poseidon's mighty Viceroy!
Kill Therops! Iolaus upon the altar!
- Poly.* Now you are wise again. Leave this Therops.
Bring Iolaus to the altar here.
Lay bare his bosom for the knife.
- Ther.* Dercetes,
Shall this be allowed?
- Derc.* We must not dare offend,
Poseidon. But when it's over, I'll break in
With all my faithful spears and save the King
And Cassiopea. Therops, 'twould be a nightmare,
The rule of that fierce priest and fiercer rabble.
- Ther.* With all the better sort I will support thee.
- Per.* Therops, my crowd-compeller, my eloquent Zeus of
the market-place, I know thy heart is big with the sweet
passion of repentance, but let it not burst into action yet.
Keep thy fleet sharp spears at rest, Dercetes. There are
times, my little captain, and there is a season. Watch and
wait. The gods are at work and Iolaus shall not die.
- Poly.* We only wait until our mighty wrath
Is shown you in the mangled worst offender
Against our godhead. Then, O Cassiopea,
I'll watch thy eyes.
- Per.* Behold her, Polydaon.
Perseus and Andromeda enter the temple.
- Cries* Andromeda! Andromeda! who has unchained her?
It is Andromeda!
- Ceph.* It is the spirit of Andromeda.
- Ther.* Shadows were ne'er so bright, had never smile
So sunny! she is given back to earth:
It is the radiant wingèd Hermes brings her.
- Derc.* 'Tis he who baffled us upon the beach.

I see the gods are busy in our Syria.

Andromeda runs to Cassiopea and clasps and kisses her knees: the soldiers making way for her.

Cass. (taking Andromeda's face between her hands)

O my sweet child, thou livest!

Andr. Mother, mother!

I live and see the light and grief is ended.

Cass. (lifting Andromeda into her arms)

I hold thee living on my bosom. What grief
Can happen now?

Ceph. Andromeda, my daughter!

Poly. (awaking from his amazement)

Confusions! Butcher, thou hast betrayed me. Seize
them!

They shall all die upon my mighty altar.

Seize them!

Pers. (confronting him)

Priest of Poseidon and of death,

Three days thou gav'st me: it is but the second.

I am here: Dost thou require the sacrifice?

Poly. Art thou a god? I am a greater, dreadfuller.

Tremble and go from me: I need thee not.

Pers. Expect thy punishment. Syrians, behold me,
The victim snatched from grim Poseidon's altar.

My sword has rescued sweet Andromeda
And slain the monster of the deep. You asked
For victims? I am here. Whose knife is ready?
Let him approach.

Ther. Who art thou, mighty hero?

Declare unto this people thy renown
And thy unequalled actions. What high godhead
Befriends thee in battle?

Pers. Syrians, I am Perseus,

The mighty son of Zeus and Danaë.

The blood of gods is in my veins, the strength

Of gods is in my arm: Athene helps me.
 Behold her ægis, which if I uncover
 Will blind you with its lightnings; and this sword
 Is Herpe, which can pierce the earth and Hades.
 What I have done, is by Athene's strength.
 Borne from Seriphos through pellucid air
 Upon these wingèd shoes, in the far west
 I have traversed unknown lands and nameless continents
 And seas where never came the plash of human oars.
 On torrid coasts burned by the desert wind
 I have seen great Atlas buttressing the sky,
 His giant head companion of the stars,
 And changed him into a hill; the northern snows
 Illimitable I have trod, where Nature
 Is awed to silence, chilled to rigid whiteness;
 I have entered caverns dim where death was born:
 And I have taken from the dim-dwelling Graiæ
 Their wondrous eye that sees the past and future:
 And I have slain the Gorgon, dire Medusa,
 Her head that turns the living man to stone
 Locking into my wallet: last, today,
 In Syria by the loud Aegean surges
 I have done this deed that men shall ever speak of.
 Ascending with winged feet the clamorous air
 I have cloven Poseidon's monster whose rock-teeth
 And fiery mouth swallowed your sons and daughters.
 Where now has gone the sea-god's giant stride
 That filled with heads of foam your fruitful fields?
 I have dashed back the leaping angry waters;
 His Ocean-force has yielded to a mortal.
 • Even while I speak, the world has changed around you.
 Syrians, the earth is calm, the heavens smile;
 A mighty silence listens on the sea.
 All this I have done, and yet not I, but one greater.
 Such is Athene's might and theirs who serve her.

You know me now, O Syrians, and my strength
I have concealed not. Let no man hereafter
Complain that I deceived him to his doom.
Speak now. Which of you all demands a victim?

He pauses: there is silence.

What, you have howled and maddened, bound sweet
women

For slaughter, roared to have the hearts of princes,
And are you silent now? Who is for victims?
Who sacrifices Perseus?

Ther. Speak! Is there
A fool so death-devoted?

Pers. Claims any man victims?

Cries There's none, great Perseus.

Pers. Then, I here release
Andromeda and Iolaus, Syrians,
From the death-doom: to Cepheus give his crown
Once more. Does any man gainsay my action?
Would any rule in Syria?

Cries. None, mighty Perseus.

Pers. Iolaus, sweet friend, my work is finished.

He severs his bonds.

Iol. O mighty father, suffer me for thee
To take thy crown from the unworthy soil
Where rude hands tumbled it. 'Twill now sit steady.
Dercetes, art thou loyal once again?

Derc. For ever.

Iol. Therops!

Ther. I have abjured rebellion.

Iol. Lead then my royal parents to their home
With martial pomp and music. And let the people
Cover their foul revolt with meek obedience.
One guiltiest head shall pay your forfeit: the rest,
Since terror and religious frenzy moved

To mutiny, not their sober wills, shall all
Be pardoned.

Cries Iolaus! Iolaus!

Long live the Syrian, noble Iolaus!
Iol. Andromeda, and thou, my sweet Cydone,
Go with them.

Ceph. I approve thy sentence, son.

*Dercetes and his soldiers, Therops and the Syrians
leave the temple conducting Cepheus and Cassiopea,
Andromeda and Cydone.*

Iol. Now, Polydaon,—

Poly. I have seen all and laughed.

Iolaus, and thou, O Argive Perseus,
You know not who I am. I have endured
Your foolish transient triumph that you might feel
My punishments more bitter-terrible.
'Tis time, 'tis time. I will reveal myself.
Your horror-staring eyes shall know me, princes,
When I hurl death and Ocean on your heads.

Pers. The man is frantic.

Iol. Defeat has turned him mad.

Per. I have seen this coming on him for a season and a
half. He was a fox at first, but this tumult gave him
claws and muscles and he turned tiger. This is the end.
What, Polydaon! Good cheer, priest! Roll not thy eyes:
I am thy friend Perissus, I am thy old loving school-mate;
are we not now fellow-craftsmen, priest and butcher?

Poly. Do you not see? I wave my sapphire locks
And earth is quaking. Quake, earth! rise, my great
Ocean!
Earth, shake my foemen from thy back! clasp, sea,
And kiss them dead, thou huge voluptuary.
Come barking from your stables, my sweet monsters:
With blood-stained fangs and fiery mouths avenge me
Mocking their victory. Thou, brother Zeus,

Rain curses from thy skies. What, is all silent?
 I'll tear thee, Ocean, into watery bits
 And strip thy oozy basal rocks quite naked
 If thou obey me not.

Iol. (advancing)

He must be seized.

And bound.

Pers.

Pause. See, he foams and clutches!

Polydaon falls to the ground.

He

Is sentenced.

Per.

Polydaon, old crony, grows thy soul too great within
 thee? dost thou kick the unworthy earth and hit out with
 thy noble fists at Heaven?

Iol.

It was a fit, it is over. He lies back white
 And shaking.

Poly.

*(As he speaks, his utterance is hacked by pauses of
 silence. He seems unconscious of those around him, his
 being is withdrawing from the body and he lives only in
 an inner consciousness and its vision.)*

I was Poseidon but this moment.

Now he departs from me and leaves me feeble:

I have become a dull and puny mortals.

(half rising)

It was not I but thou who feared'st, god.
 I would have spoken, but thou wert chilled and stone.
 What feared'st thou or whom? Wert thou alarmed
 By the godhead lurking in man's secret soul
 Or deity greater than thy own appalled thee?
 Forgive, forgive! pass not away from me.
 Thy power is now my breath and I shall perish
 If thou withdraw. He stands beside me still
 Shaking his gloomy locks and glares at me
 Saying it was my sin and false ambition

Undid him. Was I not fearless as thou bad'st me?
 Ah, he has gone into invisible
 Vast silences! Whose, whose is this bright glory?
 One stands now in his place and looks at me.
 Imperious is his calm Olympian brow,
 The sea's blue unfathomed depths gaze from his eyes,
 Wide sea-blue locks crown his majestic shape:
 A mystic trident arms his tranquil might.
 As one new-born to himself and to the world
 He turns from me with the surges in his stride
 To seek his Ocean empire. Earth bows down
 Trembling with awe of his unbearable steps,
 Heaven is the mirror of his purple greatness. . . .
 But whose was that dimmer and tremendous image? . . .
 A horror of darkness is around me still,
 But the joy and might have gone out of my breast
 And left me mortal, a poor human thing
 With whom death and the fates can do their will. . . .
 But his presence yet is with me, near to me. . . .
 Was I not something more than earthly man? . . .

(with a cry)

It was myself, the shadow, the hostile god!
 I am abandoned to my evil self.
 That was the darkness! . . . But there was something
more

Insistent, dreadful, other than myself!
 Whoever thou art, spare me. . . . I am gone, I am taken.
 In his tremendous clutch he bears me off
 Into thick cloud; I see black Hell, the knives
 Fire-pointed touch my breast. Spare me, Poseidon. . . .
 Save me, O brilliant God, forgive and save.

He falls back dead.

Pers. Who then can save a man from his own self?
lol. He is ended, his own evil has destroyed him.
Pers. This man for a few hours became the vessel

Of an occult and formidable Force
And through his form it did fierce terrible things
Unhuman: but his small and gloomy mind
And impure dark heart could not contain the Force.
It turned in him to madness and demoniac
Huge longings. Then the Power withdrew from him
Leaving the broken incapable instrument,
And all its might was spilt from his body. Better
To be a common man mid common men
And live an unaspiring mortal life
Than call into oneself a Titan strength
Too dire and mighty for its human frame,
That only afflicts the oppressed astonished world,
Then breaks its user.

Iol. But best to be Heaven's child.

Only the sons of gods can harbour gods.

Per. Art thou then gone, Polydaon? My monarch of
breast-hackers, this was an evil ending. My heart is full
of woe for thee, my fellow-butcher.

Iol. The gods have punished him for his offences,
Ambition and a hideous cruelty
Ingenious in mere horror.

Pers. Burn him with rites,
If that may help his soul by dark Cocytus.
But let us go and end these strange upheavals:
Call Cireas from his hiding for reward,
Tyrnaus too, and Smerdas from his prison,
Fair Diomedes from Cydone's house.
Humble or high, let all have their deserts
Who partners were or causes of our troubles.

Iol. There's Phineus will ask reasons.

Pers. He shall be satisfied.

Per. He cannot be satisfied, his nose is too long; it will
not listen to reason, for it thinks all the reason and policy
in the world are shut up in the small brain to which it is

a long hooked outlet.

Pers. Perissus, come with me: for thou wert kind
To my fair sweetness; it shall be remembered.

Per. There was nothing astonishing in that: I am as
chock-full with natural kindness as a rabbit is with guts;
I have bowels, great Perseus. For am I not Perissus? am
I not the butcher?

They go out: the curtain falls.

SCENE 3

The audience chamber of the Palace.

Cepheus, Cassiopea, Andromeda, Cydone, Praxilla, Medes.

Ceph. A sudden ending to our sudden evils
Propitious gods have given us, Cassiopea.
Pursued by panic the Assyrian flees
Abandoning our borders.

Cass. And I have got
My children's faces back upon my bosom.
What gratitude can ever recompense
That godlike youth whose swift and glorious rescue
Lifted us out of Hell so radiantly?

Cyd. He has taken his payment in one small white coin
Mounted with gold; and more he will not ask for.

Cass. Your name's Cydone, child? your face is strange.
You are not of the slave-girls.

Cyd. O I am!
Iolaus' slave-girl, though he calls me sometimes
His queen: but that is only to beguile me.

Andr. Oh, mother, you must know my sweet Cydone.
I shall think you love me little if you do not
Take her into your bosom: for she alone,
When I was lonely with my breaking heart,
Came to me with sweet haste and comforted
My soul with kisses,—yes, even when the terror
Was rising from the sea, surrounded me
With her light lovely babble, till I felt
Sorrow was not in the same world as she.

And but for her I might have died of grief
Ere rescue came.

Cass. What wilt thou ask of me,
Even to a crown, Cydone? thou shalt have it.

Cyd. Nothing, unless 'tis leave to stand before you
And be for ever Iolaus' slave-girl
Unhidden.

Cass. Thou shalt be more than that, my daughter.

Cyd. I have two mothers: a double Iolaus
I had already. O you girl-Iolaus,
You shall not marry Perseus: you are mine now.
Oh, if you have learned to blush!

Andr. (*stopping her mouth*)

Hush, you mad babbler!
Or I will smother your wild mouth with mine.

Perseus and Iolaus enter.

Ceph. O welcome, brilliant victor mighty Perseus!
Saviour of Syria, angel of the gods,
Kind was the fate that led thee to our shores.

Cass. (*embracing Iolaus*)

Iolaus, Iolaus, my son!
My golden-haired delight they would have murdered!
Perseus, hast thou a mother?

Pers. One like thee

In love, O Queen, though less in royalty.

Cass. What can I give thee then who hast the world
To move in, thy courage and thy radiant beauty,
And a tender mother? Yet take my blessing, Perseus,
To help thee: for the mightiest strengths are broken
And divine favour lasts not long, but blessings
Of those thou helpest with thy kindly strength
Upon life's rugged way, can never fail thee.

Ceph. And what shall I give, seed of bright Olympus?
Wilt thou have half my kingdom, Argive Perseus?

Pers. Thy kingdom falls by right to Iolaus
In whom I shall enjoy it. One gift thou hadst
I might have coveted, but she is mine,
O monarch: I have taken her from death
For my possession.

Ceph. My sunny Andromeda!
But there's the Tyrian: yet he gave her up
To death and cannot now reclaim her.

Iol. Father,
The Babylonian merchants wait, and Ciresas:
The people's leaders and thy army's captains
Are eager to renew an interrupted
Obedience.

Ceph. Admit them all to me: Go, Medes.
As Medes goes out, Diomedes enters.

Andr. Diomedes! playmate! you too have come quite safe
Out of the storm. I thought we both must founder.

Diom. Oh, yes, and now you'll marry Perseus, leave me
No other playmate than Praxilla's whippings
To keep me lively!

Andr. Therefore 'tis you look
So discontent and sullen? Clear your face,
I'll drag you to the world's far end with me,
And take in my own hands Praxilla's duty.
Will that please you?

Diom. As if your little hand could hurt!
I'm off, Praxilla, to pick scarlet berries
In Argolis and hear the seabirds' cries
And Ocean singing to the Cyclades.
I'll buy you brand new leather for a relic
To whip the memory of me with sometimes,
Praxilla.

Prax. You shall taste it then before you go.
You'll make a fine fair couple of wilfulnesses.
I pity Perseus.

- Andr.* You are well rid of us,
My poor Praxilla.
- Prax.* Princess, little Princess,
My hands will be lighter, but my heart too heavy.
*Therops and Dercetes enter with the
Captains of the army, Cireas, Tyrnaus, and Smerdas.*
- All* Hail, you restored high royalties of Syria.
- Ther.* O King, accept us, be the past forgotten.
- Ceph.* It is forgotten, Therops. Welcome, Dercetes.
Thy friend Nebassar is asleep. He has done
His service for the day and taken payment.
- Cass.* His blood is a deep stain on Syria's bosom.
- Derc.* On us the stain lies, queen: but we will drown it
In native streams, when we go forth to scourge
The Assyrian in his home.
- Ther.* Death for one's King
Only less noble is than for one's country.
This foreign soldier taught us that home lesson.
- Cass.* Therops, there are kings still in Syria?
- Ther.* Great Queen,
Remember not my sins.
- Cass.* They are buried deep,
Thy bold rebellion,—even thy cruel slanders,
If only thou wilt serve me as my friend
True to thy people in me. Will this be hard for thee?
- Ther.* O noble lady, you pay wrongs with favours!
I am yours for ever, I and all this people.
- Cir. (to Diomede)*
This it is to be an orator! We shall hear him har-
anguing the people next market-day on fidelity to princes
and the divine right of queens to have favourites.
- Iol.* Cireas, old bribe-taker, art thou living? Did Posei-
don forget thee?
- Cir.* I pray you, Prince, remind me not of past foolish-
ness. I have grown pious. I will never speak ill again

of authorities and divinities.

Iol. Thou art grown ascetic? thou carest no longer then for gold? I am glad, for my purse will be spared a very heavy lightening.

Cir. Prince, I will not suffer my young piety to make you break old promises; for if it is perilous to sin, it is worse to be the cause of sin in others.

Iol. Thou shalt have gold and farms. I will absolve Andromeda's promise and my own.

Cir. Great Plutus!

O happy Cireas!

Iol. Merchant Tyrnaus, art thou for Chaldea?

Tyr. When I have seen these troubles' joyous end
And your sweet princess, my young rescuer,
Happily wedded.

Iol. I will give thee a ship
And merchandise enough to fill thy losses.

Pers. And prayers with them, O excellent Chaldean.
The world has need of men like thee.

Smer. (*aside*)

I quake.

What will they say to me? I shall be tortured
And crucified. But she with her smile will save me.

Iol. Smerdas, thou unclean treacherous coward soul!

Smer. Alas, I was compelled by threats of torture.

Iol. And tempted too with gold. Thy punishment
Shall hit thee in thy nature. Farmer Cireas!

Cir. Prince Plutus!

Iol. Take thou this man for slave. He's strong.
Work him upon thy fields and thy plantations.

Smer. O this is worst of all.

Iol. Not worse than thy desert.
For gold thou lustest? earn it for another.

Thou'lt save thy life? it is a freedman's chattel.

Smer. O speak for me, lady Andromeda!

Andr. Dear Iolaus,—

Ceph. My child, thou art all pity;
But justice has her seat, and her fine balance
Disturbed too often spoils an unripe world
With ill-timed mercy. Thy brother speaks my will.
Iol. Thou hast increased thy crime by pleading to her
Whom thou betrayed'st to her death. Art thou
Quite shameless? Hold thy peace!

Andr. Grieve not too much.

Cireas will be kind to thee; wilt thou not, Cireas?
Cir. At thy command I will be even that
And even to him.

Noise outside.

Ceph. What other dangerous clamour
Is at our gates?

Perissus enters brandishing his cleaver.

Per. Pull out that sharp skewer of thine, comrade
Perseus, or let me handle my cleaver.

Ceph. Thou art angry, butcher? Who has disturbed thy
noble serenity?

Per. King Cepheus, shall I not be angry? Art thou not
again our majesty of Syria? And shall our majesty be
insulted with noses? Shall it be prodded by a proboscis?
Perseus, thou hast slaughtered yonder palæozoic ichthyo-
saurus; wilt thou suffer me to chop this neozoan?

Pers. Calmly, precisely and not so polysyllabically, my
good Perissus. Tell the King what is this clamour.

Per. My monarch, Phineus of Tyre has brought his long-
nosed royalty to thy gates and poke it he will into thy kingly
presence. His blusterings, King, have flustered my calm
great heart within me.

Ceph. Comes he alone?

Per. Damoetes and some scores more hang on to his long
tail of hook-nosed Tyrians; but they are all rabble and

proletariate, not a citizen butcher in the whole picking. They brandish skewers; they threaten to poke me with their dainty iron spits,—me, Perissus, me, the butcher!

Ceph. Phineus in arms! This is the after-swell
Of tempest.

Pers. Let the Phœnician enter, comrade.

Perissus goes out.

Look not so blank. This man with all his crew
Shall be my easy care.

*Phineus enters the hall with a great company,
Tyrians with drawn swords, Damoetes, Morus and
others: after them Perissus.*

Ceph. Welcome, Tyre.

Cass. Thou breakest armed into our presence, Phineus.
Had they been earlier there, these naked swords
Would have been welcome.

Phin. I am not here for welcome,
Lady. King Cepheus, wilt thou yield me right,
Or shall I take it with my sword?

Ceph. Phineus,
I never have withheld even from the meanest,
The least thing he could call his right.

Phin. Thou hast not?
Who gives then to a wandering Greek my bride,
Thy perfect daughter?

Cass. She was in some peril,
When thou wert absent, Tyre.

Phin. A vain young man,
A brilliant sworder wandering for a name,
Who calls himself the son of Danaë,
And who his father was, the midnight knows.
This is the lord thou giv'st Andromeda,
Scorning the mighty King of ancient Tyre.

Ceph. He saved her from the death to which we left her,
And she was his,—his wife, if so he chose,

- Or, conquered by the sword from grim Poseidon,
His then to take her as he would from that moment.
- Phin.* Do his deeds or thy neglect annul thy promise?
- Iol.* King Phineus, wilt thou take up and lay down
At pleasure? Who leaves a jewel in the mud,
Shall he complain because another took it?
- Prax.* And she was never his; she hated him.
- Phin.* I'll hear no reasons, but with strong force have her,
Though it be to lift her o'er the dearest blood
Of all her kin. Tyrians!

(Andromeda takes refuge with Perseus.)

- Abandon, princess,
The stripling bosom where thou tak'st thy refuge.
Thou hast mistook thy home, Andromeda.
- Iol.* 'Tis thou mistakest, Phineus, thinking her
A bride who, touched, shall be thy doom. Get hence
Unhurt.
- Phin.* Prince Iolaus, the sword that cut
Thy contract to Poseidon, cuts not mine,—
Which if you void, thou and thy father pay for it.
- Pers.* Phineus of Tyre, it may be thou art wronged,
But 'tis not at his hands whom thou impugnest;
Her father gave her not to me.
- Phin.* Her mother then?
She is the man, I think, in Syria's household.
- Pers.* Her too I asked not.
- Phin.* Thou wooedst then the maid?
It shall not help thee though a thousand times
She kissed thee yes. Pretty Andromeda,
Wilt thou have for thy lord this vagabond,
Wander with him as beggars land and sea?
Despite thyself I'll save thee from that fate
Unworthy of thy beauty and thy sweetness,
And make thee Queen in Tyre. Minion of Argos,

Learn, ere thou grasp at other's goods, to ask
The owner, not the owned.

Pers. I did not ask her.

Phin. Then by what right, presumptuous, hast thou her?
Or wherefore lies she thus within thy arm?

Pers. Say, by what right, King Phineus, thou wouldst take
her,
Herself and all refusing?

Phin. By my precontract.

Pers. Thou gavest her to Death, that contract's broken.
Or if thou seekest to revoke thy gift,
Foregather then with Death and ask him for her.
The way to him is easy.

Phin. Then by my sword,
Not asking her or any, because I am a king,
I'll take her.

Pers. If the sword is the sole judge,
Then by my own sword I have taken her, Tyrian,
Not asking her or any, who am king
O'er her, her sovereign. This soft gold is mine
And mine these banks of silver; this rich country
Is my possession and owes to my strong taking
All her sweet revenues in honey. Phineus,
I wonder not that thou dost covet her
Whom the whole world might want. Wrest her from me,
Phoenician, to her father she belongs not.

(opening his wallet)

King Phineus, art thou ready? Yet look once more
On the blue sky and this green earth of Syria.

Phin. Young man, thou hast done deeds I'll not belittle.
Yet was it only a sea-beast and a rabble
Whom thou hast tamed; I am a prince and warrior.
Wilt thou fright me with thy ægis?

Pers. Not fright, but end thee;

For thou hast spoken words deserving death.
Come forth into the open, this is no place
For battle. Marshal thy warlike crew against me,
And let thy Syrian mob-men help with shouts:
Stand in their front to lead them; I alone
Will meet their serried charge, Dercetes merely
Watching us.

Phin. Thou art frantic with past triumphs:
Argive, desist. I would not rob thy mother
Of her sole joy, howe'er she came by thee.
The gods may punish her sweet midnight fault,
To whom her dainty trickery imputes it.

Pers. Come now, lest here I slay thee.

Phin. Thou art in love
With death: but I am pitiful, young Perseus,
Thou shalt not die. My men shall take thee living
And pedlars hawk thee for a slave in Tyre,
Where thou shalt see sometimes far off Andromeda,
A Queen of nations.

Pers. Thou compassionate man!
But I will give thee, hero, marvellous death
And stone for monument, which thou deservest;
For thou wert a great King and famous warrior,
When still thou wert living. Forth and fight with me!
Afterwards if thou canst, come for Andromeda;
None shall oppose thy seizure. Behind me, captain,
So that the rabble here may not be tempted
To any treacherous stroke.

*Phineus goes out with the Tyrians, Damoetes
and the Syrian favourers of Phineus, followed by Perseus
and Dercetes. Cereas behind them at a distance.*

Ceph. Sunbeam, I am afraid.

Andr. I am not, father.

Ceph. Alone against so many!

Iol.

Shall I go, father,

And stand by him?

Ceph.

He might be angry. Hark!

The voice of Phineus.

Id.

He cries some confident order.

Ceph.

The Tyrians shout for onset; he is doomed.

There is a moment's pause, all listening painfully.

Iol.

The shouts are stilled; there is a sudden hush.

Ceph.

What can it mean? This silence is appalling.

Dercetes returns.

What news? Thou treadest like one sleeping, captain.

Derc.

O King, thy royal court is full of monuments.

Ceph.

What meanest thou? What happened? Where is Perseus?

Derc.

King Phineus called to his men to take alive

The Greek; but as they charged, great Perseus cried,

"Close eyes, Dercetes, if thou car'st to live,"

And I obeyed, yet saw that he had taken

A snaky something from the wallet's mouth

He carries in his baldric. Blind I waited

And heard the loud approaching charge. Then suddenly

The rapid onset ceased, the cries fell dumb

And a great silence reigned. Astonishment

For two brief moments only held me close;

But when I lifted my sealed lids, the court

Was full of those swift charging warriors stiffened

To stone or stiffening, in the very posture

Of onset, sword uplifted, shield advanced,

Knee crooked, foot carried forward to the pace.

An animated silence, life in stone.

Only the godlike victor lived, a smile

Upon his lips, closing his wallet's mouth.

Then I, appalled, came from that place in silence.

Ceph.

Soldier, he is a god, or else the gods

Walk close to him. I hear his footsteps coming.

Hail, Perseus!

Perseus returns, followed by Cereas.

Pers. King, the Tyrians all are dead,
Nor need'st thou build them pyres nor dig them graves.
If any hereafter ask what perfect sculptor
Chiselled these forms in Syria's royal court,
Say then, "Athene, child armipotent
Of the Olympian, hewed by Perseus' hand
In one divine and careless stroke these statues.
To her give glory."

Ceph. O thou dreadful victor!
I know not what to say nor how to praise thee.

Pers. Say nothing, King; in silence praise the Gods.
Let this not trouble you, my friends. Proceed
As if no interruption had disturbed you.

Cir. O Zeus, I thought thou couldst juggle only with
feathers and phosphorus, but I see thou canst give wrinkles
in magic to Babylon and the Medes. (*shaking himself*) I
cannot feel sure yet that I am not myself a statue. Ugh!
this was a stony conjuring.

Per. (*who has gone out and returned*)

What hast thou done, comrade Perseus? Thou hast
immortalised his long nose to all time in stone! This is a
woeful thing for posterity; thou hadst no right to leave
behind thee for its dismay such a fossil.

Ceph. What now is left but to prepare the nuptials
Of sweet young sunny-eyed Andromeda
With mighty Perseus?

Pers. King, let it be soon

. That I may go to my blue-ringed Seriphos,
Where my mother waits, and more deeds call to me.

Cass. Yet if thy heart consents, then three months give us,
O Perseus, of thyself and our sweet child,
And then abandon.

Pers. They are given.

Andr. Perseus,
You give and never ask; let me for you
Ask something.

Pers. Ask, Andromeda, and have.

Andr. Then this I ask that thy great deeds may leave
Their golden trace on Syria. Let the dire cult
For ever cease and victims bleed no more
On its dark altar. Instead Athene's name
Spread over all the land and in men's hearts.
Then shall a calm and mighty Will prevail
And broader minds and kindlier manners reign
And men grow human, mild and merciful.

Pers. King Cepheus, thou hast heard; shall this be done?

Ceph. Hero, thou camest to change our world for us.
Pronounce; I give assent.

Pers. Then let the shrine
That looked out from earth's breast into the sunlight,
Be cleansed of its red memory of blood,
And the dread Form that lived within its precincts
Transfigure into a bright compassionate God
Whose strength shall aid men tossed upon the seas.
Give succour to the shipwrecked mariner.
A noble centre of a people's worship,
To Zeus and great Athene build a temple
Between your sky-topped hills and Ocean's vasts:
Her might shall guard your lives and save your land.
In your human image of her deity
A light of reason and calm celestial force
And a wise tranquil government of life,
Order and beauty and harmonious thoughts
And, ruling the waves of impulse, high-throned will
Incorporate in marble, the carved and white
Ideal of a young uplifted race.
For these are her gifts to those who worship her.

- Adore and what you adore attempt to be.
- Ceph.* Will the fiercer Grandeur that was here permit?
- Pers.* Fear not Poseidon; the strong god is free.
He has withdrawn from his own darkness and is now
His new great self at an Olympian height.
- Cass.* How can the immortal gods and Nature change?
- Pers.* All alters in a world that is the same.
Man most must change who is a soul of Time;
His gods too change and live in larger light.
- Ceph.* Then man too may arise to greater heights,
His being draw nearer to the gods?
- Pers.* Perhaps.
But the blind nether forces still have power
And the ascent is slow and long is Time.
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:
The day shall come when men feel close and one.
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
Since little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.

